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ABSTRACT

Traditional educational administration research has held that administrative and curricular concerns are separate and unrelated. This study examines the extent to which principals see themselves in a predominantly administrative role, as opposed to an educational-curricular role. Interviews and evaluation were used to determine how principals define curriculum and how they view their role in forming it. The publication contends that curriculum concerns are the heart of education. Chapter 1 includes an introduction describing the goals of the research, methods, questions, and outcome. In chapter 2, issues of curriculum, authority, and the principalship are covered, including the current and emerging paradigms about curriculum, conclusions, and questions. Curriculum, knowledge, and the principalship are covered in chapter 3, including a definition of school knowledge, access to knowledge, and student and teacher views on knowledge. Chapter 4 covers issues of curriculum and professional relationships, including conversational possibilities, and the problems and possibilities of teacher-administrator communication. Chapter 5 examines on a deeper level educational relations and developing concern over them. In chapter 6, the changing paradigms about the principalship and curriculum are examined. Concluding remarks and insights are also included. (Contains 11 references.) (JPT)

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CURRICULUM LEADERSHIP AND THE PRINCIPALSHIP

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Under contract to Alberta Education, Edmonton. Alberta
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Table of Contents

Chapter 1 0
INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY 1
What This Study is About 1
Notions of Curriculum 3
The Question of Approach and Method 4
In Conversation with the Principals 6
Looking for Depth, Searching for Substance 9
The Research Group 12
On the Nature of Collaborative Relations 22
Reflections on Methodology 24
Research Questions 24
Learning to Let Go: Getting Beyond "Right Answers" 28
Personal Value, Public Benefit 31
Validity in Interpretive Research 34
On the "Products" of Research 35

Chapter 2 37
ISSUES OF CURRICULUM, AUTHORITY AND THE PRINCIPALSHIP 38
Introduction: The Current Paradigm — Supervising the Delivery of Curriculum 38
The Emerging Paradigm: Principals and Curriculum Decision-Making 46
Conclusion 52
Questions 55

Chapter 3 56
CURRICULUM, KNOWLEDGE AND THE PRINCIPALSHIP 57
Introduction 57
What is School Knowledge? 59
Access to Knowledge 63
Student Voices 66
Teacher Knowledge 67
Curriculum, Knowledge and Teacher Supervision 69
Conclusion 71
Questions 72

Chapter 4 73
COLLEGIALITY: ISSUES OF CURRICULUM AND PROFESSIONAL RELATIONSHIPS 74
Introduction 74
Conversational Possibilities 75

Educational Half-Lives 81
Creating Spaces: Problems and Possibilities 83
Hard Truths 91
Conclusion 93
Questions 96

Chapter 5 98
DEEP PURPOSE: TOWARDS AN UNDERSTANDING OF THE NATURE OF EDUCATIONAL RELATIONS 99
Surface Versus Depth 99
Going Beyond the Trappings 102
From "Delivering the Curriculum" to a Concern for Educational Relations 106
The Neglect of Deep Purpose 113
Conclusion 114
Questions 115

Chapter 6 116
STRONG LEADERSHIP: PRINCIPALS AND CURRICULUM 117
Introduction 117
The Current Paradigm: Tough Answers 120
The Emerging Paradigm: Asking Tough Questions 123
Conclusion 128
Questions 129

Concluding Remarks 130

Concluding Insights 130

Bibliography 133

DISCLAIMER

Any views expressed herein are those of the authors and not necessarily those of Alberta Education.

This study would not have been possible without the generous input of the Principals. Their voices provoked a genuinely educative experience for the research group. We thank them for their willingness to explore perplexing and complex issues about what it means to be an educational leader. Their exploration of tough questions required honesty, insight, experience and vulnerability. They helped us to continue the inquiry with seriousness, passion and tenacity.

The research group is appreciative of the role of the Steering Committee. Their close reading of early drafts of the text and their engagement with us in the dialogue pushed us to greater clarity and to new insights.

Particular thanks are due to Dr. John Burger for his sensitive and wise guidance throughout the project. He was patient with our timelines, encouraging as we wrestled to find an appropriate, albeit unorthodox methodology, and courageous as we explored new terrain.

Special thanks are due to Maureen Stewart and to Jewel Lightfoot. Maureen painstakingly prepared endless drafts of the manuscript and tolerated the picayune editorial changes. Jewel coordinated input into the myriad versions and maintained the communication links with members of the research group (even at an international level).

We hope that the result will be a contribution to informed dialogue about leadership for the 1990s and beyond. We believe that the educative centre of school leadership must be pedagogy, that learning and teaching questions must focus all leadership practices if schools are to be places that both engage young people and their teachers intellectually and spiritually and that contribute to a healthy and productive society.

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Our task in this first section is to introduce the reader to this study and to provide a general orienting framework within which the study can be understood. This is particularly important in the case of the present study mainly because, as researchers, we have chosen to break with certain of the established protocols and rules-of-procedure that govern the conduct of most educational research. There are good reasons for this departure and more will be said about the need for an alternate approach to educational research later in the study. First, however, it is important to say something about the questions that gave rise to this study and why they were important questions to inquire into.

What This Study is About

Fundamentally, this study arose from a certain curiosity about the way school principals understand curriculum and about the way they view themselves and their role vis-à-vis "things curricular." A good deal of common sense wisdom and conventional practice supports a fairly clear-cut separation between curriculum (and matters curricular) on the one hand, and administrative concerns on the other. To engage in only a mild over-simplification, historically the task of educational administration has mainly been seen as that activity which oversees the "delivery" of the curriculum to the students in the school. Certain aspects of the current mode of organizing the provincial "system" of education lend credence to this assumption. Not only that, but traditional patterns of organization in higher education seem to confirm the idea that curricular concerns are one thing, and that administrative concerns are quite another. Nor is it difficult to see how the quite recent emergence of educational administration —conceived as a separate and independent field of study—has also helped to contribute to a sense of apartness between these two domains. This raised an

interesting question for the research group: to what extent do school principals see themselves and their role in predominantly administrative terms, as opposed to seeing their role in more educational-curricular terms?

At its simplest then, what the research group was interested in investigating was the nature of principal involvement in curriculum. But already that way of formulating the question is a bit problematic. The last thing we were interested in as a research group was attempting to collect data in order to categorize principals according to the "level" or the "type" of their involvement in curriculum. Our questions were at once more subtle and more complex. We were more interested in the way principals conceptualized or understood curriculum *and the meaning of curriculum* than in knowing anything factive about the amount or degree of their actual involvement. Beyond official pronouncements and text-book expositions, we wanted to know what principals understood by the term (what curriculum meant to them) and equally important, how they conceptualized their work as principals vis-à-vis curriculum.

This was the theoretic and scholarly background against which this investigation was conceived. However, at the level of actual research, a more practical and pragmatic question intruded: namely, "what meaning did the term curriculum hold for a particular group of school principals and how did this meaning work itself out in the myriad of everyday practices these principals engaged in?" Because this is an unusual and in some ways elusive question, clarification is needed as a prelude to describing the way we chose to respond to it.

A number of assumptions are contained in the research question. Foremost is the idea that the way something is understood (in this case, the idea of curriculum) is constitutive of the nature of the practices that flow out of such understanding. If this is the case, then attempting to get a sense of how principals construe the

meaning of curriculum is of considerable importance. Closely connected to this is a concern for the practices themselves. The research began with the assumption that curricular practices are not all equal and a good part of the interpretive analysis and discussion that follows (and that in effect constitutes the heart of the study) is an attempt to show the educative and pedagogic difference that certain practices make. However, by far the most important assumption we make is that curriculum concerns—broadly defined—constitute the heart and soul of the educative enterprise. If this assumption is plausible, then we can hardly be indifferent to the kind of sense principals make of curriculum.

Notions of Curriculum

At this point, it might be helpful to make some brief comments about the notion of curriculum that has guided the conduct of the inquiry given that our concept of curriculum differs from more familiar notions—such as the idea of curriculum as a list of topics or as subject matter knowledge—traditional concepts of curriculum with which we are all more or less familiar. The starting point for the study is located in the realization that over the last decade or so, the formalized study of curriculum has been undergoing a quiet metamorphosis. Eminent curriculum theorists such as van Manen, Aoki, Grumet, Schubert, Willis, Connelly, Clandinin and many others have been urging an expanded interpretation of the meaning of curriculum which aims to go beyond the somewhat narrow and prescriptive character of current interpretations. Although many points of difference exist amongst the above writers, they would perhaps concur in seeing curriculum less as a body of pre-established facts-to-be-known, skills-to-be-mastered, values-to-be-inculcated, etcetera, in favour of seeing curriculum as the term used to describe an entire set of experiences and web of relationships which have as their object the pedagogic good of the child. Something of the spirit of the difference that is at stake here is captured in Aoki's (1989) distinction between what he calls

curriculum-as-plan and curriculum-as-lived. While such approaches do not by any means eschew the need for formalized curricula, neither do they accord such curriculum the privileged place it presently occupies.

One of the questions which arose in our introductory meeting with the principals was how much of the traditional and long-standing anxiety teachers typically experience over the legislated need to "cover" the curriculum is rooted in traditional concepts of curriculum as the terrain to be covered. Our interest, then, centred on how this concept constricts practitioners—teachers, principals, and researchers alike. This interest clarified the purpose of the research: to reconceptualize the meaning of curriculum and relate it to the emerging paradigm of educational leadership and its place in the role of the principal. Once this clarification was achieved, the original research questions were reframed to meet the reality of school life. This understanding allowed the research group to capture the intent of the original questions in somewhat broader manner than originally conceived.

The Question of Approach and Method

In the study that follows, we attempt to show the consequences of taking an expanded notion of curriculum seriously. As a group of committed educators, the research group was interested in eliciting from principals their conceptions of curriculum and in trying to see how such conceptions worked themselves out in practice. However (and it is here that the research differs most markedly from most conventional forms of educational research), the intent was not simply to report the "facts" or to provide a neutral exposition of the consequences of holding this or that interpretation of curriculum. Rather, we opted to engage in a critical and self-reflective dialogue with the transcribed interview material. As a research group, we did not want to treat the principals' comments and

observations as the last word, but rather as the first word. So the comments and observations so willingly given by the principals become in this research the opportunity or the occasion for further dialogue and reflection on the part of the research group *and it is this further dialogue and reflection that is offered here as the "product" of this research effort.*

The implications of this for the conduct of the present research project are quite important. In the first place, we deliberately rejected the idea of formulating an elaborate research design and/or methodology as too confining and overpowering for the nature of the questions we were asking. Rather than placing our faith in a research "design," we opted for the less well-travelled alternative of allowing the question (and the power of the question) to take us in whatever directions seemed most profitable and productive. In practice, this meant embracing a more fluid and open approach, one which had to be allowed to evolve as the research proceeded. Nevertheless, as stated previously, we had a clear sense of direction as evidenced in the questions formulated to guide the interviews. Once the interview data was available to us through tapes and transcripts, it became the starting point for dialogue and reflection that became another layer in a recursive and discursive process of research. One result of this project is that we have come to see research as a more open and creative process than it is typically taken to be.

One further point should be noted. The research group did not embark on this project with the idea that we were trying to solve any particular "problem" of curriculum or of curriculum implementation. (In retrospect, it is noteworthy how infrequently the notion of curriculum implementation entered our vocabulary.) So one would look in vain in this study for a careful delineation of the research "problem," and just as important, this study does not pretend to offer a set of findings wherewith to address (much less solve) this or that problem of

curriculum. Our hope is that as this work unfolds, our reasons for deciding against traditional methodologies will become apparent.

In Conversation with the Principals

In talking with the principals, one of the things we soon discovered was that principals differ considerably—often quite dramatically—in their understanding of the meaning of curriculum and its place in the overall scheme of things. For some principals, their leadership role often seemed circumscribed by the legal requirement to "deliver" the prescribed curriculum. For these principals, "curriculum" is something that comes in a box from Edmonton, and is what teachers are duty-bound to "implement." For others, the task is considerably more complex and finds its roots in their charge or vocation as educators. For the research group, the difference in attitude toward an understanding of curriculum was interesting to say the least. And in this research, we have not felt the need to hide our preferences (or pretend we have none) for one view over another. Where we can, we offer reasons for our preferences and where we cannot, we leave the task of judgement in the hands of others.

In this research, the notion of conversation looms large as a mode of proceeding. The research group came to a new appreciation for the value of conversation as a much-neglected methodological device. Very different from talk, which is aimed at "obtaining information" or "eliciting responses" at its best, conversation allows for a more depthful disclosure of who and what we stand for as a community of educators within the Province. If there is value in this research, it is linked to the value and importance of conversation as a means whereby we are enabled to confront ideas and beliefs which paradoxically we never knew we held before. As a side note, we would advocate the need for more conversation and less "data-gathering" as the way in which we need to proceed.

Conversations are risky things. In a real conversation we risk encountering attitudes and beliefs we feel are wrong or at least misguided. Not only that, but in a real conversation we also risk somewhat of ourselves. This is a risk of a very different kind and of a different order of magnitude. In a world in which "expert knowledge" commands its own form of obedience, real conversations can be threatening things. In our conversations with principals and among ourselves, we were led to consider whether the notion of "expert" is any longer a useful or helpful notion (in education). The question to be answered is whether the notion of "expert" fosters the conditions for real conversation or in some way detracts from it. From the perspective of this research project this is a question of considerable importance.

One other thing needs to be stated about conversation as a mode of research and that is that all true conversations have a life of their own that cannot be precisely planned or specified in advance. The point about a real conversation is that you do not know at the outset where you will end up and indeed, if you are to have a real conversation, you must give up completely any hope of knowing (and wanting to know) where you will finally arrive. We have a feeling that the loss of control that this entails is one reason for the general unpopularity of conversation in educational research and in the culture more broadly. And yet, on a more philosophical level, this project has convinced us that hope for real progress and meaningful change in education is closely connected to our capacity and willingness to truly converse (as opposed to merely "exchanging information" or "communicating viewpoints"). We think these are very different things. As a side note, we are probably less committed than at the outset to the idea that more "information" is needed to get the conversation going.

As the research proceeded, it became more and more obvious that principals vary a lot in terms of their orientation to their task and role as educators. For some,

the task of educating children seems to be a straightforward, unambiguous affair with clear parameters and few unsolved questions; for others it is a more difficult and delicate process—easy to talk about in the abstract perhaps, but inordinately difficult to practice well. The following quotes taken from two different principals illustrate this point.

> You know, leadership is so easy to talk about but much harder to actually do it... I don't pretend to have all the answers and the more I am in schools, the more humble I become.
>
> I think you rob kids if you downplay the importance of what they are doing... What I want to know is, why play the game if you don't keep score?

As a research group, we were led to speculate at length over the difference in orientation that is at work here, and how some principals go on to develop a reflective orientation to their work, whereas others maintain a strictly functionalist-pragmatic perspective. More so than others, these principals tend to see themselves as overseeing the delivery of a "service" where the only important questions revolve around the degree of success (measured mainly in quantitative terms) attained in delivering the service or in the levels of efficiency and effectiveness that are achieved. However, in the face of what we know of the conditions of contemporary life (both in and out of school), we were led to wonder whether a functionalist-pragmatic perspective towards education is any longer adequate to the task before us. In short, principals need to be Educators in the true meaning of the word. As one member of the research group expressed it, principals not only need to know where they are going, but more significantly, why it is important to get there. (This idea is discussed at greater length in the

chapter on *Deep Purpose*.) It is this latter sense of purpose and purposefulness that seemed to be missing from the "delivery of service" orientation to the role.

Looking for Depth, Searching for Substance

Nobody pretends that teaching today is easy or simple. As a research group, we felt that while teaching is easy to do badly, it is the most difficult job in the world to do well. As we talked to the principals and read and discussed their transcripts (and then re-read and re-discussed some more), we were struck over and over by the depth, complexity and challenge inherent in their work. Only the most naive and ill-informed observer of the social landscape could argue otherwise. And as communal bonds loosen and value-frameworks continue to disintegrate, we felt the situation can only be expected to worsen. Like it or not, this is the reality we face and while we feel it has to be faced in a practical and pragmatic manner (indeed we have no choice), it also has to be faced as a problem with theoretical and philosophical dimensions. We would like to see space open up for serious dialogue and debate in terms of these latter dimensions. We hope this present study is a small step in this direction.

This point was brought home to the research group in a particularly vivid way by one of the principals who told the following story as it related to his work with teachers.

> I read an article in the *Harvard Educational Review* from an Oxford professor of educational philosophy in which he was asking why we have to be so down on educational philosophy. He quoted some examples from the Nazi press in Germany when they were discussing the genocide of the Jews, including the minutes of meetings in which people were starting to question, why are we doing

> this to these Jewish people? Others were responding by saying, come on, we've got a job to do; let's not get philosophical about it, if you want to get philosophical, go to the university or some place; let's not start being too theoretical; let's get on with it, we've got to be pragmatic here! So I thought to myself, you know, we're not quite into genocide, but that's more or less what teachers say when you start to question; well, why are you doing that?

As a research group, this led to speculation on the possible causes of the prevailing "culture of pragmatism" that seems so much a part of today's educational landscape. And while we weren't able to be definitive on this question, we nonetheless wondered how well education fares in such a climate. We were not alone in our wonderings; other principals spoke in much the same vein.

> I don't want to sound as I've got all the answers because I haven't but I do think that over time, schools generally have lost sight of their knitting... I think teachers generally are into a survival mode a lot of the time, and also in an isolation mode, which means they have lost sight of what they are there for.
>
> Many teachers have lost sight of the fact that if you don't question on an ongoing basis—why am I doing what I'm doing, and whether if what I'm doing is consistent with good pedagogic practices, then I think you are doing a disservice to kids...

The idea that we are in some way educationally adrift is a theme that came through in our interviews with principals. Like a ship trapped in shallows, somehow or other we need to find our way back to deep water. The following

quote from one of the participating principals is characteristic of others who spoke on just this point.

> I think there has to be a much more refined kind of orchestration of the school system because what has happened is that we've tended to drift amorphously from one theme to another and we're not really sure why we're doing what we're doing, other than we want to help kids—and we all want to do that folks! And so, we went into "effective teaching" and "effective schools" and everything we did had to be "effective." Later on, it had to be "excellent" and so on. But we never really knew what "excellent" meant —actually, it came to mean students just doing the best they could which is hardly a revolutionary idea—but the point is we were seduced by the term and "effective" was the same thing. Now we're into "school improvement" and like "instructional leadership," you're supposed to be able to speak this language, but nobody ever knows what these things mean. The point I'm making is that there's a superficiality about it all.

Throughout our research, the issue of language loomed large as a focus of concern. Like the principal above, we were never sure whether our modern educational language was a help or a hindrance in our efforts to fathom a more complete grasp of educational purposes. As a group of committed educators, we wondered how much of the time we too were "bewitched by language" and by a vocabulary that at base is simply not very educational.

At this point, we think we should say something about the group of principals who consented to be part of this research enterprise. In all, a group of five principals were involved including two elementary, one junior-high, and two high-school principals. However, it is important to state that from a research point of view,

the principals did not constitute a "sample" and so there is no attempt to claim that these principals and their views are representative of a larger population in any statistical sense. They were invited to participate in this research study simply because they were thoughtful people who, it was thought, would have interesting ideas to contribute. And while formal (i.e. statistical) representativeness was not an issue for us, we nonetheless feel that the principals (and the schools they represented) constituted a fairly typical province-wide cross-section of educational administrators.

It is also important to state that the ideas and opinions put forward in this study are not necessarily those of the principals involved, although they may from time-to-time coincide. From a methodological point of view we did not see our job as researchers simply to chronicle or faithfully report the views of others. That would be closer to journalism than to educational research. So although the thoughts and ideas of the principals were, if you will, our starting point, it is our interpretive analysis and reflective consideration of those thoughts, ideas, etcetera, that constitute the real research data. The closest parallel we can think of would be the area of literary criticism.

The dominant impression left in the minds of the research group at the conclusion of our work with the principals was of an enterprise which no longer quite knows what it truly stands for. This is by no means a criticism of the principals some of whom were labouring to express a sense of deep disquiet which goes far beyond the everyday difficulties and normal frustrations that are part of the natural accompaniment of the work of school principals. Of course this is not true for all, and certainly we encountered principals for whom such tensions did not exist. But where they did exist they seemed to be deep and experientially real tensions. One of the tasks of this study is that of trying to wrestle with these tensions in such a way as to bring them to the attention of others who have the chance to empathize

(or not) as they see fit. But we are already ahead of ourselves and need to back up in order to provide a more coherent account of who we were and how and why we embarked on this research project.

The Research Group

We think, at this point, it would be useful to say something about the research group, who we were and why we got together to collaborate on this particular research project. We also want to talk briefly about the history of the project because in the case of the present study, the life of the project and the way it evolved is inseparable from the conclusions we draw and the observations we make. In other words, the so-called "process" versus "product" distinction simply does not exist when applied to this study. In this study, *the product is the process and the process is the product.* We like to think that in dissolving this distinction, our research cuts important new ground in the area of applied educational research.

What began in 1989 as a one-year project evolved into a major three-year commitment. This was unforeseeable at the outset, although in retrospect the one-year timeline was unduly optimistic. What is significant, however, is that none of the research group feel inclined to be in any way apologetic about the way the project has evolved. In fact, it is testimony to the power of the project that it has sustained the efforts of the research group over the duration.

The project itself was a rather unique blend of university personnel and senior school system administrators which we feel can stand as a model for future university/school system partnerships. There is much to be learned from this project about the nature of collaborative relations and we will say more on this score later in the study. At this point, we think it could be helpful for members

of the research group to introduce themselves and provide some brief impressions on the nature of their involvement in the project. By doing this, we hope to provide a richer context for the study than would otherwise be available.

Pat Klinck

This research project is the result of silences—silences between principals and curriculum supervisors, between principals and teachers and between superintendents and principals. The silences are an indication of the absence of some topics—topics such as students' learning, teachers as learners, the changing nature of the role of teachers, and the purpose of public education. As the Superintendent of Program Services in 1988, I realized that the budget cuts and the planning we had done were not sufficient to propel us towards excellence. For a school system to be a truly healthy organization, there must be dialogues which break down the barriers and ensure that the educational purpose remains front and centre.

I began by talking to Dr. Roger Woock, then Head of the Department of Educational Policy and Administrative Studies at the University of Calgary. We examined the current literature on instructional leadership. There appeared to be a dearth of information on the principal as a curriculum decision-maker. Many studies indicated that curriculum was a major element in the instructional leadership role. None, however, elucidated exactly what that might entail. The subject supervisors with whom I was working were often confidants, colleagues and advocates along with principals. Nonetheless, issues around curriculum and students' learning were rarely discussed in-depth. I then turned to Alberta Education, which was part way through the implementation of the Secondary Program Review. The Secondary Program Review, which aimed at major changes in secondary schools, was most preoccupied with the classroom and the

actualization of the new curriculum. All of this was perfectly reasonable. However, as a classroom teacher, school-based and system-based administrator, I knew deep in my bones that decisions made by school principals had a major impact on how courses went for students, and how the school was governed in terms of curricular emphasis.

Dr. Woock and I agreed to approach the Planning Secretariat of Alberta Education to see if they would fund an interactive study on the principalship. We wanted to focus on the principal as curriculum leader. After some negotiation, the study was funded. The purpose of the study was to discover the topics and fill in the silences around curriculum and student learning.

As the study has progressed, key players have come and gone. The methodology of the study has evolved, grown messy, become more complex and in the process, much more enlightening. I believe that we have come a long way toward the vision that we set out to achieve. We have identified six major areas in which subject supervisors, principals, superintendents, classroom teachers and parents can carry on a discussion about the deep sense of purpose in education. It is that deep sense of purpose that binds us to public education and make us advocates —even in times of extreme difficulty—for its role in formulating a future for the children and youth of our province.

It is my sincere hope that the results of the study presented here will lead us to a more vigorous and authentic debate at this time of change in public education and in our political systems.

Pat Clifford

I have put off writing this part of the study until the very last possible day, avoiding the moment when I would actually have to come face-to-face with my own reluctance to speak about my commitment to a project of this magnitude. I was the writer of much of what you are about to read, and if this had been a traditional research project, my role would have been very clearly defined: I would have been the one to have listened carefully to what everyone said and reproduced it faithfully and objectively. Of course, however, the participants in this project developed a methodology that challenges the very possibility of such hands-off, neutral and disengaged research, and what we did instead fell in the strangest way most heavily on the person who is generally regarded as the ghost in such a document–the paid writer.

I was invited into the project in the usual way that such things go. On leave to pursue a doctorate in education, I was confounded by silence. It was almost impossible to find anyone who considered curriculum questions important to the business of running schools. I saw in this study the opportunity to pursue outside the walls of the institution some of the issues that were being neglected inside. Thus, I came on board the project with enormous sympathy for its aims.

I had not anticipated the discovery of yet another sort of silence in the academic world: silence surrounding the experience of listening, hour after hour, to others speak about their work. The experience of listening, hour after hour, to the analysis of this talk, with my own voice on the tape as a participant. The experience of typing more than 200 pages of transcripts simply as preparation to

begin the work for which I was responsible. I knew, of course, that I need to listen with sensitivity and care. The meaning of what was emerging lay not only in the actual words that I copied with such effort from the tape. The meaning lay also in my own knowledge of the context of those words—knowledge gained because my own participation was welcomed as an equal. I need to acknowledge how powerful this welcome was, for when the study began I was a student. When it finished, I was (and continue to be) a primary teacher. It is not often that teachers and students are accorded this kind of respect.

Though I am aware that other members of the project will probably wish I were less blunt in putting matters this way, it is important to be truthful about a third kind of silence. Much traditional writing and thinking about educational administration is strangely removed from the world of the people who know its effects most intimately: teachers, parents and young people. During much of the writing, I lived a life of double intensity. The hundreds of hours of listening and transcription have left their mark inside me. Everyone who spoke to and with us became part of my bone and muscle as I sat day after day at the computer, earphones digging into my flesh, listening and re-listening to their words, to their hesitations and to their silences. I know this work in ways that no one else on the project does. There were days when I would bring drafts forward to the group for analysis and critique that I was abrasive, abrupt, and difficult to get along with. Not everything that our principals said was easy for a teacher to listen to, yet it was the practising teacher in the group who had to listen—not once, not twice—but many times over in an effort to make sense. It was the student and the teacher who had to hear, over and over again, how very far we have yet to come if we are to make schools better.

Anger would sometimes wash over me in waves; anger that I had both to experience and to discipline for the two years in which I did this work. But not

just anger. There was also the exhilaration of beginning to find a shape, a way of understanding not only what **was**, but also what **might be**. As exhausting as it was to live with both the intellectual and emotional intensity of my part in this whole project, it has been enormously satisfying to know that we have forged a path through the issues that beset schools—a path that helps me every day in my work with children and my colleagues. Each of us on this project now dwells differently because of what we built together. For me, the biggest change has been to recognize that the best work I can do to forge public images of the emerging paradigm of education leadership is in the classroom. My commitment is to work and to write as a teacher and as a colleague on behalf of children. I have come to believe without reservation that fundamental educational change is both necessary and possible. Each of us who makes a moral commitment to improving the lives of young people chooses a different place to stand. Recognizing both the impertinence and the obligation that my choice entails, I stand as a teacher.

Traditionally, teachers have been regarded as the objects of administrative practice. People worry about how to change us, motivate us, inservice us, supervise, evaluate and lead us. With what my friends and colleagues would recognize as a typical lack of modesty, I would like to add a very different sort of worry to the list. I would like principals and system leaders to listen to us, as well, as equals—as people who know in ways it may be impossible for them to imagine. I have had the experience, through this project, of holding knowledge that could be gained only by living daily with the most mundane, the least glamorous parts of the work. That has helped me to understand that many of us dwell this way in schools and school districts as well.

Sue Ditchburn

In many ways the study is a personal history of ideas—ideas that coalesced the personal and the professional. This personal history of ideas was shaped by my professional role over the course of the study—from Faculty member to Superintendent. The choice and the nature of that change reflected a profound desire to be more closely connected to schools, to teachers, and to children. So the journey which the study represents for me is intensely personal, a record of the issues that became increasingly potent as I struggled to understand a new responsibility and to discharge it with integrity and care in the context of pressing financial constraints and demands for change in public education.

The voices of the principals which informed the voices of the research group demanded deep attention, forcing us to peel back the layers of our taken-for-granted reality. In revisiting leadership we asked for what, for whom, by whom and why. We came to see curriculum, the totality of educative experiences in the context of the lived experience of teachers and children in schools, as the central question for educators. As we engaged principals in conversation about their understandings of curriculum and its relation to leadership, we became profoundly committed to an emerging view of curriculum as the moral framework central to all educational discussion. Such a view of curriculum resides in the questions, in a living of the questions now to quote Rilke. Such a view requires a deep tolerance for ambiguity, a willingness to engage all voices in authentic ways, and courage to take an educative stand on behalf of children. The study became a vehicle for living the questions now with trusted and challenging colleagues whose realities with mine were shaped by the shared understandings about our work, about the nature of public education, about leadership, which were engendered through the ongoing conversation.

In essence, the journey was moral at heart—what is the nature of our lived experience if we believe that public education is critical to the health of our society and to its citizens. While all this seems heady at best, so was the journey —one that energized, alienated at times, challenged, depleted, but at all times confronted deeply-held beliefs and values, and pushed us to deeper understanding.

Rod Evans

I want to start by saying that my involvement in this research has been a stimulating and rewarding experience. I joined the research group because of an underlying interest in the proposed topic: the nature of principals' understanding of curriculum. Earlier research[1] had awakened me to the fact that a considerable gulf separated curriculum people from those who regarded themselves first and foremost as administrative types. In this earlier research, I attempted to see how a closer and more sympathetic relationship might be forged between these two "specializations." It became clear to me that unless a rapprochement between these two domains could somehow be achieved, principals and other potential educational administrators were missing out on a potential rich source of understanding and insight. The opportunity to work on a project to formally examine this question in the way of a research study was of considerable interest to me.

A further attraction was the prospect of working with principals and senior administrators from a large Alberta school system in a collaborative and long-term venture. As a university research professor of educational administration I place cautious belief in the importance of a mild form of "theory" as something

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[1] See: Evans, R., *Ministrative Insight: Educational Administration as Pedagogic Practice.* Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Alberta, Edmonton, Alberta, 1989.

that can and should inform practice; but I also hold to the importance and indeed the necessity of practice having something to say back to "theory" in return. I have not yet been successful in convincing myself that these are two mutually distinct categories. On a purely personal level, this project offered the promise of exploring such a belief.

In my view, this project has been important on two main counts. First, because of what it represents and second, because of the importance and significance of the substantive questions it is attempting to raise. In the first place, the project demonstrates the viability of long-term, collaborative relations between universities and their constituencies. In a world characterized by transience and temporality, short-term relations and the popularity of the quick-fix, the durability and sustainability of this partnership should not be overlooked. Secondly, this project is important in terms of the questions and issues it is attempting to raise. I believe they are significant questions which need to be carefully considered by thoughtful educators. For myself, I have renewed my appreciation for the value of small-scale, fine-grained, introspective study of the educational enterprise.

A final note: principals do difficult, challenging and important work. They need "supervision" less than they need advice, help, assistance, support, direction, encouragement, forgiveness and the rest. The same is true for teachers. The requirement for educative leadership is real and pressing. The question arises: where will such leadership come from, and how best can it be nurtured?

Louise Partridge

My involvement in the Research Project began when I was appointed to the superintendency in 1988. Dr. Klinck had identified three principals of schools in Area III and felt I would have some interest in the project.

During my seven years as a principal I worked closely with members of the Department of Curriculum. Subject supervisors, consultants and Dr. Klinck had supported my work and the work of teachers in the schools for which I had responsibility. This support ranged from noon-hour inservice sessions to conversations about curriculum implementation. However, we seldom really touched the more serious questions relating to the fundamental purposes of our work.

When I moved into the superintendency I was aware that not all principals felt that curriculum issues were important to them. I was, therefore, looking for ways of impacting the thinking of principals about curriculum and their role as curriculum leaders. I felt from my own experience that this might be a way for me to have impact on children's learning experience in schools.

The work on the Research Project caused me to examine my own view of curriculum, and of public education in general. Of equal importance has been the clarification and articulation of my understanding of the connections between curriculum and school leadership.

The project has changed my work with principals. It has helped me to recognize the value of conversations with principals and to work to reduce barriers which result from the hierarchical structure of the school system. The six areas identified in the project have helped to give focus and direction to my work with

principals. I believe the papers will provide a context for many more conversations as we continue to look for ways to engage our students in meaningful, significant learning experiences.

We note the major contribution of Dr. Bill Washburn to the work of the research group. Bill's retirement occurred part way through the study and we acknowledge his contribution to our collaborative work.

At this point we would like to offer a few thoughts on the nature of collaborative activity generally, and why we think it is a fruitful avenue to pursue.

On the Nature of Collaborative Relations

The notion of collaboration has entered the vocabulary of educators in a big way. Although many definitions of the term exist in the literature, we were less interested in modelling our activities according to a set of pre-established, theoretical guidelines than in finding a mutually satisfying way of inter-relating amongst ourselves and the principals who, after all, were our raison-d'ètre.

All too often in the past the university research community has viewed the field of practice as a convenient source of "data" or as the site of "research problems" which once identified, can be extracted from the site of their occurrence and removed to the university setting to be analyzed or otherwise addressed. The results of this scholarly analysis are then communicated back to the field typically in the form of practical prescriptions (remedies) for improved performance. This is very much the "applied science" model of conceiving the relation between research and practice. It is also a model in which the world of practice is problem-ridden and the world of research and theory is solution-bound. For a

variety of reasons this model was never given serious consideration by the research group.

In its place, we opted for a more free-flowing and open-ended concept of research and collaboration in which dialogue and discussion took the place of method and design. Nor did we place much faith in the traditional separation of practice from theory, preferring instead to work from a more holistic and integrated foundation. This meant a complete re-casting of the roles within the research group and a new approach to the work such that there were no outside "experts" or external "change agents." One of the consequences of this project is that we have begun to develop a healthy scepticism for the "expert-in, expert-out" approach to educational change and the vast proliferation of short-term inservice sessions, weekend workshops, etcetera, that have become such a feature of the modern educational landscape in the wake of this particular conceptualization of research-practice relations. Unless educators are content to see their work increasingly relegated to the margins of cultural and social significance, we think there is no alternative to developing ongoing, reflective, long-term, deeply dialogic relations on topics of serious educational significance. Here lies the possibility for personal and individual growth and not merely change. We turn now to touch on a few issues of methodology which in this study assumes both greater and lesser significance than most studies of this kind.

Reflections on Methodology

In the following paragraphs we wish to lay out the steps and describe the concrete activities undertaken as part of our research project. This is important as knowledge of the actual steps taken is our non-methodological substitute for a research design in the traditional sense.

The project commenced approximately eighteen months after its original conceptualization by Dr. Pat Klinck. During that time, and in conjunction with University of Calgary and Alberta Education colleagues, the project took shape. This shape is evident in the initial proposal upon which the contract between Alberta Education and Calgary Board of Education is based. The research questions as outlined in the original proposal follow.

Research Questions

1. What knowledge base do principals draw upon as instructional leaders during curriculum implementation?

    1.1 What are the attributes of curriculum knowledge that the principal as instructional leader refers to in his or her implementation decisions?

    1.2 What do principals feel are the greatest needs relative to curriculum implementation?

2. What factors alert principals to the need for curriculum change?

3. How do principals determine strategies to promote curriculum change?

    3.1 How do principals involve teachers and others in curriculum implementation?

4. How do principals understand the relationship between teaching and learning and their role in facilitating this relationship?

4.1 How do principals determine what and how students are learning?

4.2 How do principals know if learning has been improved by the curriculum implementation?

From these questions, a number of interview questions were generated, although the format of the interviews was more conversational than these questions suggest. The actual conduct of the interviews is discussed in the chapter.

Suggested Interview Questions:

1. Principals' knowledge:

   1.1 What does curriculum mean to you?

   1.2 What does the concept of curriculum leader mean to you?

   1.3 What do you need to know and do in order to provide curriculum?

   1.4 Describe your participation in a successful curriculum change as a teacher and as a principal.

2. Principals' action:

   2.1 Which components do you consider to be critical in successful curriculum implementation?

   2.2 When a curriculum change is slated for your school, what are the steps you would take to familiarize yourself with the situation?

   2.3 Do you consider your personal intuitions and tacit knowledge in arriving at your orientation or disposition towards the curriculum change? If so, relate an example.

   2.4 What role does your personal orientation play in curriculum implementation?

   2.5 How do you design a strategy for curricular implementation?

2.6 Do you involve teachers, parents or others in the process?

2.7 What factors facilitate or impede staff commitment to a curriculum implementation process and how do you adjust for these factors?

2.8 How do you know when curriculum implementation has been successful?

3. Inservice implications:

3.1 How might central office personnel assist you in the curriculum change process?

3.2 Describe an inservice opportunity that was helpful for you in your curriculum leadership function.

3.3 Describe an inservice opportunity for teachers which has been effective.

3.4 How do you use professional days to further curriculum implementation plans?

3.5 How are Alberta Education curriculum documents utilized? Please refer to specific documents, where possible.

4. Teaching Learning Relationships:

4.1 How can curriculum implementation activities be used as a means of improving teaching-learning relationships?

An additional contributing influence should also be mentioned—the commitment of Gordon Elhard, Area Superintendent, Calgary Board of Education, to examine the role of his principals in curriculum. This commitment recognizes the problematic separation of curriculum and administration, not only in Faculties of Education but in school systems as well. Some of the issues raised in the principals' talk make sense only in the context of this separation. Further, this recognition and desire for reintegration have been an important influence on the research group and were endorsed by Gordon Elhard's successor, Louise

Partridge. This study reinforces the value of collaboration between superintendents of schools and those responsible for curriculum, while at the same time strengthening the educational mandate of school systems.

Once the research group was constituted, consisting of senior school system administrators, a graduate student and research assistant, and university research professors, our first step was to convene a meeting between the research group, the principals who had agreed to participate and a representative of Alberta Education, Dr. John Burger, Acting Director, Policy and Planning Branch. This meeting held in the Autumn of 1989 was conceived as a way of introducing the key players, setting the broad parameters of the study and beginning the conversation. The discussion was tape-recorded and later transcribed. From an analysis of the discussion it was decided to follow the meeting with individual interviews with each of the participating principals. As a result of this decision the research group set to work to draft a set of questions designed to elicit from the principals their attitudes and dispositions vis-à-vis curriculum as detailed previously. Over the course of the next few months interviews were held with each of the participating principals. In each case the interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed with the printed transcripts forming an important part of the overall database of the study.

Soon after the initial meeting with the research group, principals and Alberta Education, a steering committee was formed. Its members were Dr. John Burger, Acting Director, Policy and Planning Branch, Alberta Education (Chair); Mr. Keith Wagner, Deputy Director, Policy Development Curriculum Branch, Alberta Education; Ms. Susan Kropfreiter, Associate Director, Teaching and Certification Development Branch, Alberta Education; and Mr. Dan Cooney, Education Consultant - Physical Education, Calgary, Alberta Education. The

committee met with the research group throughout the study, providing input and direction as the study progressed.

Learning to Let Go: Getting Beyond "Right Answers"

One of the interesting philosophical and methodological problems we encountered early in the research process was how to get beyond the apparent tendency on the part of the principals to interpret our interview questions as requiring some kind of "correct response." Examining the transcripts after the interview we could see how some of the interviews had taken on an interrogative quality[2] in that the principals had taken the interview situation very literally and basically interpreted it as a question and answer session. In other words, the principals had tried to answer the questions as if there actually were "right" answers that could somehow be judged correct. We think that this is a problem that has both philosophical and practical aspects and we wish to address both.

On the philosophical side, we were led to speculate whether there is something endemic to the culture of education that predisposes educators to respond to questions narrowly and exclusively in terms of an answer or response that is presumed to be correct.[3] We think we have all been well-socialized into responding to questions in just this way. We also wondered to what extent some

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[2] It did not escape the notice of the research group that the "interrogative quality" was in some respects reminiscent of courtroom proceedings where we could imagine the stern tones of the judge admonishing the witness to "Answer the question..." and "Stick to the facts..." In certain respects, courtroom discourse can be seen as paradigmatic for social discourse more generally including education.

[3] On a related point, we thought that certain personnel selection practices of some school jurisdictions who employ "trained" interviewers who are taught to "listen-for" key words and/or phrases by interviewees in response to set questions, and to count the frequency of their occurrence (as evidence of pedagogic competence) are very much linked to the same "right-answer" syndrome we are discussing here. We think such practices are debilitating and mitigate against the possibility of true dialogue.

approaches to testing, especially multiple-choice items (for which there is only one right answer), teaching strategies such as the "right versus wrong" technique (in which marks are subtracted for incorrect "responses"), and in general, a drive for more "objective criteria" of all kinds has not fostered a trained incapacity to converse on the deeper issues of curricular and pedagogic purpose. And yet, isn't this what school principals are expected to be able to do? Or have we reached a point where many educators (including principals) consider these as simply non-questions—in the sense that the "deeper issues" (concerning curricular and educational purposes) are already settled—and thus the only questions worth pursuing are those technical questions dealing with the best *ways* and most effective *means* whereby such purposes are to be achieved.

This issue may more properly be understood as a leadership issue. Could the perceived lack of depth refer to a lack of experience in discussing "deeper issues"? Do we typically engage principals in such discussions? Had the research group held preliminary discussions on the "deeper issues" of curriculum and leadership would subsequent conversations have had a different focus?

In general, we felt that modern schooling practices do little to foster the reflective and contemplative side of life and that ironically principals themselves may be the first casualties of a system they now unwittingly propagate. Of course there are exceptions and certainly we encountered principals grappling with important curricular questions which had arisen in their professional (and, we suspect private) lives as educators. But by and large it was difficult to avoid the conclusion that many of the transcripts seemed to lack a strong curricular and pedagogic focus. We feel this is an educational problem of significant proportions and we offer some thoughts on this issue later in the study. However, we recognize that the substance of the interviews was shaped in part both by the

questions and tone of each interview, a point which is addressed in greater detail later in the discussion.

On the practical side we feel that part of the problem may have something to do with the subtle but important difference between conducting an interview and holding a conversation. In recent times, the interview has grown in popularity as interest in qualitative research has surged. Often the "interview" is seen as the qualitative counterpart to the more quantitatively-oriented "questionnaire." But here again language lets us down. From our perspective, there is all the difference in the world between an interview and a conversation and for us it was "conversation" that was needed for our purposes as educational researchers.[4]

With the interviews completed and the conversations transcribed, we were ready to begin a reflective dialogue on the substance of the principals' comments. It was at this point that the lack of a method, in the traditional sense, caused the most difficulty in the sense that we were now thrown back on our own resources to make what we could of the material before us. In essence the process called for each member of the research group to read through each transcript and to make notes on what was noteworthy or revealing of the curricular understanding displayed in each principal's transcribed text. In this process we relied upon our personal knowledge and subjective understanding of the nature of the curricular

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[4] This problem emerged most vividly during phase one of the study when the research team decided to re-do an interview with one of the participating principals on account of the stilted and monologic character of the discourse that resulted from the interview. This interview was conducted by people who were originally part of the research group but who, due to other commitments, did not remain as part of the inquiry. We learned from this interview that engaging in conversation is a very different activity from "eliciting responses" or searching for information. We learned that the work of "conversing" must be deeply informed by the ongoing inquiry and suggests to us that this project is quite different (methodologically speaking) from most other forms of educational research for which neutral observers can be effectively trained in the techniques of "data-gathering." We do not think it is accidental that we commonly speak of the "art" of conversation. We also wonder if there is an issue of leadership here.

and pedagogic task. The next step was to meet as a research group in order to share insights and raise questions arising from the text. As we pondered the transcripts and replayed the taped conversations, we found ourselves arriving at a remarkable degree of consensus (though by no means complete agreement) on the significance and substantive meaning of the texts before us. Our conclusions —inevitably tentative and incomplete—were being slowly formed through a triple "D" process of debate, dialogue and discussion. In an open and democratic context of equality and mutual interdependence each member of the group was free to raise questions, challenge assumptions and test ideas and interpretations. In order to safeguard the discussions and the insights so derived we decided to tape-record the talk of each group meeting. Out of these meetings the themes, topics and titles of the various chapters that constitute this study were derived.

Personal Value, Public Benefit

Without doubt the research group meetings and the free-flowing dialogue and discussion constituted the pedagogic heart of this research project. The importance of bringing together a group of committed educators of varying backgrounds and professional interests and responsibilities, sending them on a journey (of their own making) and giving space to the group to determine its own approach and general *modus-operandi* can hardly be overstated. We think projects such as this could help education become a more vital force within the overall life of the Province.

At this point, we wish to say something about the value of this process as a learning process for the study group that could not be gained in any other way. One result of this project is that the educational sensibilities of members of the research group have been clarified and deepened. While the precise nature of such change is difficult to specify (and impossible to quantify), we would describe

it as an inner-strengthening of our educational selves. We have come to see this as undoubtedly the most important outcome of the project. In an age of mass media, mass culture, mass education, etcetera, it is sometimes easy to forget that at its heart, education is a deeply and intensely personal process. We think it is not possible to overlook this fact without robbing education of its potency and force.

But the interesting thing about the "personal" is that it does not remain exclusively at the level of the personal, it spills over into adjoining areas, for instance into relations with both self and others. It shows up in different ways in our interactions with young people, teachers, parents and administrators.[5] It manifests itself in our day-to-day, moment-to-moment articulations, curricular and pedagogic dispositions, in what we consider worth knowing and doing. It guides our judgements and evaluations and what we choose to notice, and what we elect to refrain from noticing. And while the effect of deepened personal insight does not work mechanically (as in the manner of cause and effect relations) or in the manner of easily manipulable or readily programmable transformations, it still remains our best hope—indeed, we think it is our only hope—for meaningful change in the lives of teachers and so for the value of the learning in the lives of the children they teach. In this way are the personal and the public interwoven.

We think this is an important insight that is in danger of getting lost in the constant clamour for change and innovation to which teachers are continually subjected. We also think that trendy group-minded talk of getting teachers "on-

[5] This is not just a rhetorical claim. As an example of the practical difference such research can make, we wish to mention the work of research group member, Louise Partridge. As Area Superintendent for the Calgary Board of Education, part of Louise's responsibilities consist in assisting, but also supervising and evaluating the work of school principals. Louise openly acknowledges the changed character of her work with the school principals as a result of her participation in this project, as discussed earlier in this chapter.

side" or becoming "team-players" in respect of this or that educational innovation overlooks a fundamentally important point, namely that meaningful change begins and takes its point of departure at the level of individual consciousness. This is a deeply educative and time-consuming process; moreover, it is a process that is inordinately inefficient by modern economic standards. We suspect that it is this "inefficiency" (and the anti-economic disposition that lies behind it) that fuels modern attempts to short-circuit the work that is involved in any appeal to consciousness. This is one reason why we have become sceptical of the many "change-efforts" currently under way across the continent because they try to ignore or otherwise attempt to bypass consciousness. From the work of this project, we have come to realize that whereas all real education involves change, not all "change" is necessarily educational.

On a related note it is difficult to identify precisely the tradition to which this research project belongs. Although it is, broadly speaking, a qualitative study it tries to steer clear of the positivist bias inherent in many, if not most forms of qualitative research. To be truthful, as a research group our concern was not being faithful to this or that tradition of research. Nor did we engage in a careful examination of the scholarly "literature," preferring instead the freedom to bring the force of our collective understanding to bear on our readings of the principals' texts. Nevertheless, we drew extensively on the relevant literature albeit in a more informal and indirect manner. It was a contextual "reading" where the inquiry and the research literature interacted in a dialogic or reflexive manner throughout the course of our conversations. We suspect that the comments and observations contained in the following chapters say as much about ourselves as researchers as about the issues under consideration. Again, we would not have it any other way.

Validity in Interpretive Research

At this point, the question of validity is addressed briefly although it would probably be an unprofitable digression at this point to say very much on this controversial topic.

To be truthful, we are not sure that the issue of validity as typically conceived really applies in the case of the present research and that readers who are expecting to find a standard of some kind, or set of criteria against which to tell whether this research is trustworthy (i.e. whether it should be believed or not) have already lost the battle before it has begun. Given that our approach to educational research is more akin to (a type of) educational literary criticism than it is to traditional empirical research in its various and multiple forms, the notion of validity is a truly foreign notion. It is significant that the issue of "validity" and the question of whether we were engaged in "valid" research never arose during the actual conduct of the research. Only in retrospect and in conversation with our more research-minded colleagues did the issue arise.

As with all works in the humanities, our research depends upon (or hopes for) a kind of intersubjective recognition that something is the case. The claims we make on behalf of the believability (of our accounts) extend no further than ordinary experience carefully reflected upon. For this there are no "rules" or complicated processes of logical inference beyond those that guide the conduct and moment-to-moment judgements that constitute the tapestry of everyday life. Nobody would ever ask, for example, if Shakespeare's Hamlet is valid; nor would the question arise in connection with Northrop Frye's—or other literary critic's —interpretation of the work. The question is not whether a particular interpretation is "valid" but whether an account helps us see what had not been seen or perceived only dimly before. It is here, perhaps, that our concept of

research differs significantly from traditional "social-scientific" concepts. The most we can say at this point is that our research has different aims and different intentions.

On the "Products" of Research

We have already mentioned that the "findings" of this research do not consist of a carefully researched set of empirically-based findings in the usual or traditional sense. Nor is a list of "recommendations" offered for what should or should not be done based on these findings. We think these more traditional research "products" have not served education especially well in the past. In their place we offer a series of reflections or loosely-constructed conversations based on our readings and reflective analyses of the principals' texts. As we read, discussed, analyzed and then re-read and re-discussed some more, a recurring set of themes or topics seemed to us to emerge, which finally crystallized as the titles of the chapters which follow. We offer these reflective conversations as a small but hopefully significant contribution to the educational life of our Province.

By way of a concluding postscript, we end with a set of questions of practical and theoretical interest which flow out of the work of this study. These questions represent our verdict on the kinds of questions relating to the work of school principals which need to be asked, and which we hope will be carefully considered by thoughtful educators at all levels.

Chapter 2

ISSUES OF CURRICULUM, AUTHORITY AND THE PRINCIPALSHIP

ISSUES OF CURRICULUM, AUTHORITY AND THE PRINCIPALSHIP

Introduction: The Current Paradigm — Supervising the Delivery of Curriculum

There is a great deal of talk these days about old and new paradigms, and this chapter uses the contrast to explore changing views of the principal's role in curriculum. In what we call the current paradigm, the relationship between curriculum and the principalship seems clear and rational, if somewhat distant. The government, through its department of education, designs detailed programs of studies for teachers to implement. The principal ensures that staff understands what is required and oversees the implementation of mandated curricula in a faithful, efficient and effective manner. The school's successful delivery of carefully designed educational products is measured by examinations developed both inside and outside the school. If curricula fail to produce desired outcomes, new programs are developed to meet changing educational and social needs. The implementation of these changes also becomes part of the principal's job.

This understanding is based on important assumptions about curriculum and about the principalship. First, it rests on a picture of curriculum as "the stuff" that others design for students to learn: the goals, objectives, content, scope and sequence. In Aoki's terms, this is a view of curriculum-as-plan. Such a curriculum is built by experts outside particular schools and classrooms. In the words of one principal,

> in schools we place values on what we should be doing through the kinds of curriculums we're given to administer in our schools or in our classrooms. So there's always that kind of stuff there. The province says, "Here's the curriculum we expect

> you to learn to deliver. We value this kind of learning, we value these skills, or we value these beliefs." So we always have to keep that in mind.

The lines of authority in a traditional view of curriculum implementation are clear: the program of studies outlines what teachers will do. Principals manage and administer the delivery of whatever curriculum is current. Teachers do the actual curriculum work.

Described this way, principals' responsibility for curriculum seems to be a relatively straightforward matter of good management, and their authority to supervise the work of teachers derives from their position in the educational hierarchy. However, when a group of Calgary Board of Education principals came together to talk about what they actually do about curriculum in their schools, it became immediately apparent that their struggles were anything but straightforward. This chapter, and the ones that follow, will pose some questions that attempt to unravel problems and issues that lie behind our ordinary ways of talking and thinking about the principalship and curriculum. The first of these questions has to do with authority: the rights and the responsibilities of principals to oversee curriculum implementation in their schools.

It is no longer fashionable to talk about principals as managers. The 1980s saw the emergence of the concept of principal as instructional leader, but at least one principal told us that the changed description didn't make management responsibilities go away. In fact, the change made his life more complicated:

> I had a very embarrassing moment this year but I think it shows the whole idea of the principal as being an instructional leader and the curriculum generalist and whatever else you want... There is a risk in that because as much as you want to keep

> up [it is almost impossible]. Now, the embarrassing moment that happened, the Art Consultant was out—Art in Action project was operating in this school (that occurred before I arrived), and as he came out to talk about the project and wanting the commitment from the principal for another year, we got into the Art curriculum. I was talking about curriculum which was not the same as the one he was talking about... I was using, you know, the strands of drawing, and painting, and he was talking about some whole new terminology I hadn't heard about. What he informed me is that there has been a curriculum change. I didn't know it. I was embarrassed. I really was as the principal of the school that I did not know it. Don't ask me how I didn't know. I'm sure something went across my desk, but I got to the point where I don't register much of that because so much goes by.

When curriculum implementation involves making—or causing—changes in delivery systems to accommodate decisions made at a higher organizational level, principals like this one understand that they both possess and require specific kinds of authority.

Viewed from this perspective, principals are expected to keep ahead of teachers: to attend to the massive amount of paper that crosses their desks, sorting through which curriculum directives involve big changes and which do not, even when there has been little preliminary information about "the kind of things that need to happen," in the words of the same principal. If teachers get ahead of the principal in understanding and implementing curriculum changes in their daily work, there is the potential for even greater administrative trouble than dealing with the paper blizzard. Continuing to describe his embarrassment about the new Art curriculum, this principal went on to describe what happened when he handed

out outlines for long-range plans designed to help him as he observed and supervised his teachers' work:

> I handed out the long-range outlines which were referenced to the previous curriculum, not the current one. I was totally embarrassed in front of my own colleagues because I didn't know of the change. Now, they were nice enough not to bring it to my attention, but I was totally embarrassed about it. I still am... The difficulty as well is that there were only four people in this school involved in it. The others don't know about it. And that just shows how curriculum change happens.

No matter how few teachers in a school are involved in any one curriculum change, principals, whether as managers or as instructional leaders, are expected to supervise the details of planning and teaching according to current directives. The principalship requires a special kind of "authority to": the authority to supervise the delivery of curriculum, to require long-range plans "referenced" by administrators' understanding of the requirements of curriculum developed by outside experts.

Viewed in this way, principals also maintain a particular kind of authority **because of** the knowledge base from which they operate. Their authority to do their work derives, implicitly and explicitly, from knowing more than—or sooner than—their teachers. From this perspective, when principals have not kept up with the specifics of each curriculum in place in the school, their leadership can be called into question, they embarrass themselves, and they have to depend upon teachers' kindness and generosity in overlooking their errors.

If principals are expected to know all about curriculum changes before they are implemented in the school, principals are also expected to understand all the

changes in **thinking** that a new curriculum might require. As another principal said of the implementation of a new program, "It's going to take a considerable amount of time to work with teachers to get them to make some cognitive changes in how they're operating." His statement implies that he, himself, has made those cognitive changes; that he knows what he needs to do in order to cause others to make them, too; and that teachers need expert help to develop appropriate understanding.

The principals interviewed for this project identified some pressing questions raised by this hierarchical view of curriculum implementation. Some worry about whether it is possible to keep up with all of the changes; about how to keep in step with new directives in order to be helpful to teachers whose daily work will be affected by them; about who will help **them** understand the changes in thinking that new curricula demand; about what kind of assistance is available when they work with their staffs. However, few of the principals with these sorts of concerns questioned the actual assumptions about the hierarchical relationship between teachers and principals on which traditional structures of curriculum and administration are built. Some felt burdened by the immensity of the demands on their time and energy. Few actually talked openly about the educational implications of the assumption that the work and the thinking of teachers must be controlled and organized by others in order to be effective.

Some principals who spoke of curriculum in traditional ways also acknowledged that the job of curriculum leadership is too vast for any one person. Accepting that their authority derives primarily from possessing the right answers to important educational questions, they described the ways in which they delegated responsibility for the specifics of curriculum to teachers, to department heads, to curriculum consultants and to the department of education.

These principals claim expertise, knowledge and authority in different areas from curriculum. For them, the specifics of curriculum are the concern of people down the line—teachers—or outside the school—consultants and specialists. These principals readily concede that their best teachers know more about the details of curriculum than they do. As one of them notes,

> ... the master teacher is a very, very easy person to supervise. More often than not, they're the people that are coming to you with some ideas that they want to try or they have thought about things they want to do in their classroom. And they understand the curriculum very, very well, probably far better than I did as an administrator. All they were looking for was support and occasional encouragement.

Another principal described the qualities of a good teacher in this way:

> Enthusiasm for their subject, obviously a passion to share with others is probably very important. A sense of being with it, a sense of humour, ability to communicate and show caring—those kinds of things. You know, when we look for a teacher... the first thing we look for is someone who is known in the field, someone who is well-versed.

Such teachers are seen to be curriculum experts before they come to the school. Acknowledging their expertise, principals give such teachers a great deal of apparent autonomy, supporting their work with little interference when it is going well.

Principals who describe their teachers as the curriculum experts describe their own responsibility and authority to oversee the **delivery** of curriculum content,

whatever it happens to be in any particular classroom. Both good and bad teachers are seen to "have the same curriculums" and perhaps even to "use the same methodologies." What they don't do is deliver an equally satisfactory "product" to students. That failure generally shows up on the principal's desk as complaints—as teachers' complaints about students and about each other, or as students' and parents' complaints about teachers and programs. It then becomes the principal's job to deal with these problems.

One principal was very clear about his role:

> ... we deal with the educational consumer, okay. We are only as good as our last at-bats. It is what we do now not what we have done before and so on... They are consumers. They either shop at K-Mart or they shop at the Bay. If they don't come to me, I don't have any students.

Thus, an important aspect of administrative practice in schools is the management of problems that inevitably arise when teachers do **not** do their work properly. Teachers' work can be monitored "in a variety of ways from departmental examinations to the parent and teacher marks. We monitor the delivery systems..." When teaching breaks down and consumers complain or start to vote with their feet in the educational marketplace, this principal looks for what he calls "the SWAT team approach in education": expertise from outside the school to help him solve specific problems in the delivery of curriculum.

On the surface, there seem to be important differences in the pictures of authority presented by those principals who feel the burden of keeping ahead of their teachers in all matters of curriculum implementation and by those principals who seem more willing to leave the details of curriculum planning and delivery to

teachers, themselves. Pressed about what happens when the delivery system breaks down and complaints arise about teachers, principals from both groups held remarkably consistent views. As long as the school runs smoothly, there are few discipline problems, and students achieve satisfactory results, teachers require relatively little sustained engagement with their administrators. However, those teachers who fail to operate successfully within the parameters of the principal's view of success became the object of administrative concern and practice. Noting that such teachers require "more supervision, more time from administrators," one principal said, "I wish I had the solution to how to deal with these people so that you could be effective every time."

Another principal put it this way:

> The school's the thing. The school is the thing. The enterprise is the most important. If you have kids that are going to walk through the front door every day. So what we are doing is very important. And we don't want anything to impede what we're trying to do. We want all kinds of things to help us... We're going to provide our kids with the best possible education as we define it, as we can. We are going to prepare them for whatever they run into, in a sense of what is right and wrong, in a sense of skill development, attitudinal things... You do this and this happens to you...
>
> I tell the kids that the teacher is always right. Don't ever question them. I tell the Grade 12s that sometimes they are wrong but we play along with them. That's very important.

As long as students and teachers share the principal's vision of "the best possible education as we define it," schools can operate efficiently and smoothly—even if

that smoothness sometimes requires everyone's complicity in maintaining organizational fictions and appearances.

The Emerging Paradigm: Principals and Curriculum Decision-Making

Not all principals think of their work in this hierarchical way. Some challenge the assumptions of top-down management, curriculum distance and control that characterize the thinking of the current paradigm. These principals give important insights into new ways of thinking about the authority that resides in their position. It is a view of authority that understands the knowledge base of the principal in quite a different way. The current paradigm sees curriculum as "the stuff" that is delivered to students. For some principals, the knowledge base from which they derive their authority is the knowledge of details of the curriculum-as-plan. For others, it lies in delegating that kind of knowledge to others and becoming expert in overseeing the work of teachers: the knowledge of how to manage the adults in the building so that the educational enterprise can succeed in achieving the outcomes for which its curricula are designed.

In the emerging paradigm, principals start their talk about curriculum in quite different places. They raise questions about issues that are accepted as "givens" in the current paradigm: questions about who and what schools are for, about the rights of children to have a voice in curriculum decision-making, about whether school learning is significant learning. Calling it a "hard truth" that most of us would rather not acknowledge, one principal insists that we have become stuck in familiar, comfortable and sentimental educational ruts. At all levels of the organization, people say that learning is important. Challenged about whether children and young people actually are learning worthwhile things in school, people will say:

> 'That's what we do every day. What do you think I'm doing when I'm working with my kids?' But they've lost sight of the fact that if you don't on an ongoing basis question why am I doing that... and whether what I am doing is consistent with what we know, then you are doing a disservice to kids... But I think teachers have not felt the need of whatever of keeping up with what we now know about learning.

The emerging view of the relationship between principals and curriculum suggests that there is a deep sense of educational purpose that must be acknowledged and explored before discussions about the details of any program of studies can properly begin. This same principal speaks about the danger when teachers and administrators are "seduced by... satisfaction" with smoothly running schools that meet the needs of educational consumers. Noting that "you can look at schools, and visit schools, and you can see high levels of satisfaction in all facets of the school," he goes on to say that things are sometimes very different when "you get into the classroom. Even though all is well and the kids seem happy and satisfied, the way we're asking those kids to learn... is not at all... a happy scene."

In later chapters we will explore curriculum issues that derive from a changing focus on the purposes of public education. For now, it is important to emphasize the implications of this shift for the authority that resides in the principalship. Principals with a more traditional orientation speak most often about their responsibility to monitor effective delivery through achievement results and through the absence of problems with parents and students. Principals such as the one quoted here demand that both they and their staffs ask even more demanding questions: "How do you deal with that when people are out there presumably doing a fine job and everything's well? How do you begin to talk about what could be? Are these kids learning as well as they might?" Traditionally, the

focus of administration is to ensure that people do things right. Increasingly, the focus is shifting to shed new light on what the right things **are** in the first place.

Acknowledging the power that resides in the principalship, another put it this way: "When you insist upon something, yes, it will be done, but it will be done at a superficial level." However,

> ...sometimes it's very easy to look at only the surface and say, 'I see all these good things happening, or the plan is okay and this is okay, but basically what's happening deep down here—can we reflect on that? And I think that has to be done more if we are to understand the culture of the kids.

It is easy for schools, staffs and parents to become complacent—even smug—about maintaining the status quo. That complacency can even extend to teachers' use "of all of the latest techniques, the latest things: cooperative planning, cooperative teaching, the whole bit" if "deep-down, you say something is lacking and you don't know, you cannot put your finger on it. And I think it's that... it's that depth..."

Struggling to describe "that depth," these principals spoke about the children and young people in their schools before they discussed the details of the program of studies. In a direct challenge to the instrumental view of curriculum that encouraged one principal to tell students that teachers are always right, even when they are wrong, another said this:

> ...if we don't ask the kids how they feel about things, we're doing it to them, aren't we? and if we're doing it to them, in a way, that's making

> them angry. You get a lot of kids in the office and you know they've got anger in their hearts.

When principals tried to talk about learning in this way "in the middle eighties, we got jumped on," but increasing numbers sense that the educational climate is changing. Recent curriculum initiatives such as the new junior high school science program provide "an ideal vehicle for getting someone involved in their approaches to teaching and learning." That is, rather than being simply a change requiring implementation, mandated curricula can support the authority of the principal to ask probing educational questions that demand answers on a deep and exciting level.

For principals who see the opportunity of new curricula and provincial initiatives such as program continuity in this way, attention shifts dramatically to the lived experience of children and youth in classrooms, and to the responsibility of principals to participate authentically in sustained educational conversations, "not as an evaluator," not as a monitor or even as a coach, but as a colleague, "planning together and sharing while we sit in these sessions." For in admitting that many students are bored, disenfranchised and angry about what is being done to them in the name of teaching and learning, these principals also acknowledge the right of children and young people to have a say in curriculum—to negotiate the choices, decisions and options available to them on a daily basis.

If teaching and learning are directed primarily at the acquisition of "school knowledge" packaged, delivered and assessed in traditional ways, there is great potential for student alienation and a corresponding need for effective control and management to preserve the smooth running of the enterprise. Concerned with the "trapping" of schooling, we are often insensitive to

> ...the way these kids are as young people when they come to us... We are constantly looking at the kid and saying what is wrong and essentially blaming the kid: he doesn't study, he doesn't work, poor home environment, you know. He can't get along with friends, he is having difficulty growing up—you know, that sort of stuff. But we seldom look at ourselves and say, 'What's wrong with us? Why have we not been successful in helping these kids learn or helping this kid settle into school?'

If schools remain content with shallow understandings of curriculum and of knowledge, there may be two paradoxical results. Teachers, parents and administrators may be easily seduced by satisfaction, slipping into "the celebration mode," generalizing from a few instances and saying, "Look at all this exciting stuff going on. Therefore, all is well in the kingdom." Or educators may evade tough questions when things are clearly **not** well in the kingdom by blaming the children and their families for failing to fit without resistance into existing images and practices of teaching and learning. Caught in this paradox, administration may degenerate to maintaining the "satisfaction index," whether or not there is actual depth to the claims that all is well; whether or not, as one principal noted "two to three hundred students fall between the cracks." Or principals may direct much of their energy to fixing what seems to be broken: problem students and families who are seen to be dysfunctional, or to have "special" or "high" needs that ordinary teachers and classrooms cannot hope to address.

In these sorts of situations, the effective exercise of authority depends upon principals' maintaining some distance from children's and teachers' actual experience of curriculum. If "curriculum" is understood to be the program of studies prepared by experts outside the school, principals can master the details well enough and quickly enough to control, monitor and regulate their teachers'

daily work. Or principals can maintain distance by delegating curriculum decision-making to others, intervening only when things cease to operate effectively. Either way, however, the traditional distance between administration and curriculum can be maintained without actual involvement in what one principal calls "the planned chaos" of authentic learning: children's work in groups, their talk, their freedom to access a rich variety of resources, the diversity and substance of the projects on which they are working.

If, however, principals understand knowledge, itself, differently, curriculum comes to mean more than the program of studies. When principals believe that real knowledge is constructed when students engage authentically with each other, with their teachers and with a rich variety of resources, they replace concern for control and distance by concern for the educative value of every decision made within the school. Criticizing the traditional division between curriculum and administration, one principal said this:

> I think the inability to use coherent language [about learning and about educational reform] is part and parcel of the recognition that the system has organized the teachers over here. They somehow, they do the curriculum. And the principals over here because they do leadership.

What students learn in school goes far beyond "school knowledge" organized within the covers of a program of studies. The curriculum is **everything** that students experience in school. And, says this principal,

> ...the learning that you are in charge of as a principal is learning: who's doing the learning, whether those are teachers or kids; what it looks like and what they're learning. Because I see us as having sort of said, 'Well, loving children is a

> good thing and learning generically is a good thing.' But people learn **something**. They come out as having a different knowledge, whether it's a knowledge about who they are in the school because they are in the LD class and not someplace else. So they learn about their social status. They learn about what moral order looks like, by the way the discipline is set.

As the principal teacher in the school, "in fact, you say, 'Yes, we believe in learning'." Matters of administration become matters of teaching and learning:

> ...what's important on agendas, for instance. How do I spend my time? Am I in this classroom? Am I attending their meetings? Am I attending workshops... so that I can show yes, it is important; yes, I value that; this is more important than something else. And I think it's very important to do that. And to talk about learning and teaching... and to bring the conversation and say, 'How are you doing that?' Or saying to other teachers, 'I've seen that in the classroom; this is just wonderful. How about if I take your class and you go and see that?'
>
> Then we can talk about it together.

Conclusion

Principals are central figures in the education of children. In this chapter, we have examined changing images of the authority that underlies administrators' power to influence teaching, learning and curriculum. Given the right and the responsibility to oversee the work of teachers, principals also have authority **because of** the knowledge they hold. In what we have described as the current paradigm of educational leadership, that knowledge has traditionally been of two

kinds. Some principals see themselves as knowing (or needing to know) more about curriculum than their teachers in order to ensure faithful and effective delivery of service to students. Others ground their authority in the effective management of adults, delegating the details of curriculum work to those best qualified to handle it: the teachers, themselves.

A new paradigm of educational administration gives us new ways of thinking about the principal and curriculum. Increasing numbers of principals are searching for new ways of talking about curriculum and their role in it. They are developing a language of administration that helps them fit their responsibility to teachers and to the implementation of mandated curricula into a larger picture that remains more clearly focused on the daily experiences of the children they serve. Such principals look for ways to ground their authority in a consistent framework and understanding of learning within which to situate everything that happens in their schools.

Traditionally, teachers have had the primary responsibility for children in classrooms. The job of the principal has been to work much more with adults, to manage the staff. Administrative talk has been management talk: the management of human resources, of instruction, of curriculum implementation. Principals have maintained a certain distance from, yet control of curriculum. In the emerging paradigm, principals resist setting the parameters of their work in this way. Instead, they maintain an educative interest in the daily experience of children. They display that interest through their work with teachers. Management issues—agendas, timetables, discipline policies, allocation of resources—become learning issues in the largest sense. Distances dissolve, and control is replaced by increased dialogue, problem posing and problem solving.

Throughout this series of chapters we hope to provide opportunities for more dialogue, problem posing and solving about the special expertise of principals in matters of curriculum. In subsequent chapters, we intend to return to issues we touched briefly here, and to raise others that emerged in our conversations with principals. In one chapter, we will continue to ask questions about the deep purposes of public education and explore what those questions mean for the principalship. In another, we will revisit the tension between "school knowledge" and knowledge constructed through sustained, authentic engagement. In a third, we will return to relationships between teachers and principals for a closer look at collegiality—both its possibilities and its problems. Finally, we will ask questions about what it means to be a strong leader in the emerging paradigm, where right answers become less important than right questions.

Questions:

1. How do principals actually influence a child's daily experience in school?

2. What do principals need to know about curriculum?

3. Are curriculum and instruction really different things?

4. Should young people have a voice in determining what they learn?

5. How do we know if we are doing a good job in helping young people to learn?

6. How do the answers to these questions differ when the current and emerging paradigms are compared?

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Chapter 3

CURRICULUM, KNOWLEDGE AND THE PRINCIPALSHIP

CURRICULUM, KNOWLEDGE AND THE PRINCIPALSHIP

Introduction

Talking about curriculum makes some principals uncomfortable. The question, "What is your role in curriculum?" sounds easy enough. Asked directly, however, it sometimes makes administrators respond nervously, "Gee, I'd better go back to my university books and find out the answer to **that** one." Educators live in very troubling times right now, and increasing numbers of people inside and outside the profession are demanding specific responses and remedies to what they see as curriculum failures. In the face of this public concern and debate, questions about what and how students learn are becoming increasingly urgent for school administrators. The traditional separation between administration, curriculum and instruction serves us less and less well. In its place, new questions emerge: How much should principals know about the details of a large number of programs of studies, all of which seem to be changing constantly? Should principals be up-to-date about curriculum theories so they can understand where current initiatives are grounded? Is curriculum really a principal's worry at all?

The current educational paradigm is dominated by an understanding that curriculum is designed "out there" by others—people who work directly for Alberta Education, classroom teachers drawn together for the purpose of planning new programs, or even committees of education officials, teachers and laypeople. From within this paradigm, only the **implementation** of programs has dominated administrative concern. Experts have been left to think about curriculum, teachers to do it and principals to keep the ship on course.

In changing times, however, few questions about curriculum and principals remain simple. In chapter two, "Issues of Curriculum, Authority and the Principalship," we began to explore some of these questions by contrasting current and emerging views of the principal's authority in curriculum decision-making:

1. How do principals actually influence children's experience in schools?

2. What do principals really need to know about curriculum in order to oversee its implementation?

3. Should principals delegate all curriculum work to teachers?

4. Are curriculum and instruction different things?

5. What kind of distance should principals maintain between themselves, their teachers and the classroom?

6. Should children and young people have a say in what they learn?

7. How do we know when (or if) we are doing a good job? What should we change when things go wrong?

None of the principals we interviewed claimed to have settled all of these matters in their minds or in their daily practices. We make no such claims, either. We do know, however, that it is important just to ask the questions at all. In this chapter, we will begin to look at a second issue that emerged when principals explored with us their role in curriculum implementation: the nature of knowledge, itself.

What is School Knowledge?

On the face of it, curriculum is knowledge. The curriculum defines what children and young people need to learn while they are in school. For many laypeople and professionals, curriculum is a combination of content, skills and attitudes that, when acquired, represent mastery of subject matter. On the face of it, then, there is no difference between learning in school and learning, period. Children either understand their math facts or they don't. They **can** read or they can't. They know their science or they do not. The official knowledge of the school is the knowledge of the discipline, appropriately organized and sequenced to accommodate the developmental needs of students, but the knowledge of the discipline nonetheless. Viewed in this way, learning takes place in schools, but the nature of schools, themselves, is seen to have little to do with **what** children come away knowing.

And yet, from the outset, the principals we talked to acknowledge that there was more to it than this. Any curriculum is the result of choices made either explicitly or implicitly about what our society believes children ought to know. In the first chapter, we quoted a principal who reminded us that:

> in schools, we place values on what we should be doing through the kinds of curriculums we're given to administer in our schools or in our classrooms. So there's always that kind of stuff in there. The province says, 'Here's the curriculum we expect you to learn to deliver. We value this kind of learning, we value these skills, or we value these beliefs.' So we always have to keep that in mind.

How "to keep that in mind" is a significant educational problem, however. Reflecting on teachers' tendency to challenge curricula rather than to instruct it, another principal said this:

> As soon as a teacher begins to say, 'Why am I teaching this?—why am I teaching this math—only 16% of our kids go to university so why are we teaching this?' I think you are in trouble. The only reason you are teaching it is because the kids don't know it.

Recently, teachers have been encouraged to become "reflective practitioners." This principal suggests that some kinds of reflection lead to nothing but trouble. Should teachers ever ask, "Why are we teaching this?" or should they learn to deliver mandated curricula without question or debate? That is, should teachers—or principals—ask fundamental questions about how the knowledge represented in any program of studies got there in the first place? Knowledge is the heart of education, and these fundamental questions raise leadership issues that beg thoughtful examination in changing times.

Keeping the values-base of any curriculum "in mind" raises other questions about knowledge and leadership as well. The principal who is worried about teachers' complaints about mathematics is also worried about the instrumental view of learning that dominates so much public and professional concern these days. Is mathematics of value in elementary and secondary schools only because some students may end up going to university, where they may or may not need a math background? Is that how we are to evaluate the worth of what we teach? Do we encourage students to value only that knowledge that has immediate payoff in terms of perceived relevance, of examination results or the gaining of credentials like diplomas and certificates?

And if our examination results **appear** strong, is that enough? Recently, for example, Alberta Education helped teachers and school districts probe examination results in mathematics. On the surface, Alberta students fared well when compared to students from other place. Analyzed more deeply, however, the results demonstrated strength in areas of mathematics requiring rote memory,

and striking weakness in areas such as problem-solving. Curriculum documents in all subject areas are clear about how important it is to cultivate problem-solving abilities in students. Perhaps principals should be doing for teachers what Alberta Education did for the entire province: unpacking apparent measures of learning to see more clearly whether day-to-day activities in the classroom are **actually** accomplishing the most important goals of the curriculum.

Curricula clearly value some kinds of thinking more than others, which is a knowledge issue that has been resolved for a long time in education—in theory, if not in practice. Few people would advocate a curriculum that puts the development of problem-solving abilities at the bottom of its stated priorities. It is commonplace, now, to hear educators talk about the importance of "process"; indeed, even to insist that the development of skills of critical, analytical thinking are more important than the "products" that may or may not result from these processes. However, some principals opened up specific questions about the content of curricula. Are there some things that are worth knowing in themselves? Are there some things that everyone in our country should know in order that they be able to live responsibly as citizens? One says,

> it is like Social Studies. They say, 'Why should a kid take Social 30?' I think they have to take Social 30. I am very upset with the curriculum in Social Studies 10/20/30, but because I think one thing that must come out of this Social Studies and out of literature and so on is examples they can follow. That is how you teach values, that is how you teach responsibility of citizenship and all of those kinds of things that come into that. I find it dismaying that kids graduate from our high schools that don't understand what a federal system is, or how it works and they live in one.

He worries about "things like the technical program, what we're trying to do":

> The problem as I see it is that if you are going to prepare kids for what I'm told is a technological society, whatever kind of society, they need a broader knowledge base in math, those kinds of things. And things like machine shop and auto repair and so on, really won't do the trick. That's what I'm told, I don't know. If you are going to create a citizen, seems like to me you would want to give them more Social Studies, more English, especially literature, those kinds of things, it seems to me, not less. I don't think they teach those things....

This principal raises some crucial questions about the relationship between knowledge and the values represented by curriculum. Do children and young people learn only what is directly instructed, only what is explicitly identified as "content" in the program of studies? Can students learn such dispositions as cooperation, responsibility, tenacity, problem-solving, respect for knowledge and self-discipline in an auto shop, a gymnasium or an E.C.S. classroom? What do we mean when we say we want to "create a citizen"? Is it only the teaching of the federal system or the search for role models in literature that makes us moral, responsible human beings? We need to ask ourselves, "What are the fundamental dispositions of citizens, and can we cultivate them in machine shops and at the sand table as well as in Social 30?" We need to examine the ways in which children and youth come to hold the knowledge we believe is important. These are vital curriculum questions and issues, too.

Access to Knowledge

> The learning that you are in charge of as a principal is learning: who's doing the learning, whether those are teachers or kids; what it looks like and what they're learning. Because I see us having sort of said, 'Well, loving children is a good thing and learning generically is a good thing.' But people learn **something**. They come out as

> having a different knowledge, whether it's knowledge about who they are in the school because they are in the LD class and not someplace else. So they learn about their social status. They learn about what moral order looks like, by the way the discipline is set.

Few educators really ask what a curriculum stands for. Taking the content of any program of studies as "given," much of their administrative concern is to implement it effectively and efficiently, rather than to ask whose interests are served by knowledge that is included in—and excluded from—the formal program of studies. Fewer yet ask why we have chosen to organize subject matter in the ways that are so familiar to us. Instead, we talk about pedagogical intangibles—about loving children, about fostering "process" rather than "product," about self-esteem. This principal suggests that issues of curriculum and knowledge are, in some ways, issues of status and class. What we offer children to learn, who we think can actually learn it, how we take into account children's feelings about school, and what we define as learning difficulties—all of these are curriculum matters with profound implications for educators and students alike.

Streaming students by ability is one of the taken-for-granted characteristics of curriculum. The early identification of young children believed to have language deficits and learning difficulties is so ordinary a feature of professional practice that it passes almost unchallenged in many schools. By the middle of year one, students who are not yet reading and writing independently may be flagged for remedial intervention by resource teachers, psychologists and learning strategies specialists. These children may be tested, diagnosed, labelled and placed in special programs designed to meet their special needs. Indeed, a school's failure to provide such intervention may provide grounds for parents to apply for funding to place their children in private academies that claim to provide curricula the public schools neglect.

And yet, asks this principal, what does a child **really** learn when she—or, more likely he—is told he is failing to thrive in school? The diagnosis is cloaked in clinical terms: the child has problems with cognitive processes that ordinary children do not have. He is dysfunctional—perhaps emotionally, perhaps socially, perhaps behaviourally. However the diagnosis goes,

> we are constantly looking at the kid and saying what is wrong and essentially blaming the kid: he doesn't study, he doesn't work, poor home environment, you know. He can't get along with friends, he is having difficulty growing up—you know, that sort of stuff.
>
> But we seldom look at ourselves and say, 'What's wrong with us? Why have we not been successful in helping these kids learn or helping this kid settle into school?'

In Alberta, 40% of children who enter our schools do not complete their education within the allotted twelve years. That failure has, until recently, been regarded as the children's failure. Lately, some educators have been suggesting that we must look elsewhere in order to understand why we have been so unsuccessful. Understanding that knowledge is not simply "out there" to be acquired or not, these teachers and administrators have begun to ask hard questions about the ways children experience schools. Says one principal,

> the first school I was at had a very high number of older, established teachers and they were very traditional, and they didn't want to know too much. Like the grade two language teacher was pure phonics, and all she wanted were the workbooks, and don't bother me with anything else. And especially, don't come into my classroom.

Teachers have enormous power over children. Teachers control behaviour. People understand that; we expect it. Indeed, a lack of "control" is seen as a fundamental professional failure. However, this principal suggests that teachers exercise another kind of power that is even more pervasive, if less obvious. Teachers control children's access to knowledge by regulating resources, topics of study, and the use of classroom time. Through the exercise of professional judgement, teachers determine what will and will not be offered as activities, what will and will not count as subject mastery, what will and will not be viewed as normal, as appropriate or as deviant.

The exercise of this professional judgement is an essential characteristic of teaching. To call attention to it is not to criticize what teachers must inevitably do. Even the most "progressive," "innovative" or "democratic" teachers establish the code of the road for their classrooms. However, it is important to think about what happens when the educational possibilities available to children are narrow, cramped and confining; when reading is reduced to "pure phonics" and workbooks, or mathematics to rote memorization. The consequences for children are enormous when teachers exercise the kind of control that severs children's connections with the world they know outside the classroom walls. Not all teachers know how to recognize and build on the knowledge that all children bring to school with them. Teachers such as these have a profound impact on students day after day, year after year. Imagine

> wandering through that as a child, trying to get a sense of what is meaningful, trying to make sense of this thing called school which is where you're going to be six hours a day for however long.

Student Voices

In speaking about important issues that attend the exercise of teachers' power, this principal and others raise questions about the extent to which students should have a legitimate voice in influencing what they learn and how they learn it. Too many children wander through their years at school "trying to get a sense of what is meaningful" in an institution that is designed to teach them, but takes so little of their actual understanding into account. As one principal said, until teachers "try to see things through the perspective of the student, they are not going to shift trying to control from the front of the classroom. And that's no way to be a teacher these days." Several principals spoke about how important it is to get students talking, to ask them what they got out of a unit of study, what they liked about it, what they hated, what they would like to do next. For, says one,

> if we don't ask the kids how they feel about things, then we're doing it **to** them, aren't we? And if we're doing it **to** them, in a way that's making them angry. You get a lot of kids in the office and you know they've got anger in their hearts because they don't enjoy what's going on, they've got no control over they lives, nobody asks them anything, everybody's always doing it **to** them.... You've got to give them some control over their lives. Otherwise, they're going to rebel.

Many teachers and principals take up the battle on behalf of students who lose heart because of their experience at school. Such students are often dismissed as lacking ability when what they **actually** lack is the opportunity to develop confidence in themselves as robust and tenacious learners. Arguing in favour of children's right to claim their own experience and their feelings as a knowledge base for even such supposedly abstract and technical subjects as mathematics, such teachers challenge much commonly-held wisdom about what children can learn when their classrooms are enabling, not disabling environments.

One commentator described a Math 33/30 class comprised largely of students scared of mathematics and ESL students who lacked the confidence to take on a "mainstream" math class. By the end of a year of instruction that encompassed rather than excluded the students' feelings, preferences and ideas about mathematics, these supposedly weak students were successfully completing problems from the International Baccalaureate program. Such classrooms as this raise important questions about knowledge. How had the students in this program come to be seen as poor mathematics students? How had they been streamed into a non-matriculation program? Who had decided that they could not handle a "regular" course? Had it been teachers who, themselves, needed more knowledge of mathematics in order to devise imaginative programs that would allow all students access to the subject? Had it been teachers who did not want to know "too much" about alternative ways to teach? Had it been people who had managed to keep principals and consultants at bay in the name of professional autonomy?

Teacher Knowledge

We cannot know the answers to these questions, but this teacher's innovative practice suggests that what we dispense, weigh and measure as knowledge involves a complicated pattern of interaction between student, teacher and subject matter. Even if teachers don't "know too much," they can claim the right to impose that limited understanding on children and cause children to be seen—and to see themselves—as poor learners. This is very troubling, particularly since the body of knowledge about how children learn has changed in fundamental ways since the days of pure phonics and worksheets. But knowledge has changed in other places, too. What should principals do about teachers who do not keep up with developments within the actual disciplines of knowledge they are teaching: who don't know too much about current issues in science and mathematics; who don't realize that the field of literary criticism now asks questions that were unheard of

in the days when many English teachers were undergraduates? What should principals do when they, themselves, are unfamiliar with these changes?

Many current curriculum initiatives explore the ways in which learning occurs when students make connections between their own experiences and the new information we want them to acquire. Fewer implementation efforts recognize that the same process holds true for teachers and administrators as well. People tend to cleave to beliefs, practices and resources that they know well. It is hard to adapt to content changes in curricula that demand we give up some of our "best stuff": our favourite texts, familiar units, preferred topic sequences. It is even more difficult to understand and adopt substantive changes in the very ways in which we are required to think about subjects, themselves. In recent years, changes in the Language Arts curricula have demanded that teachers seriously re-think the role of language in learning. New initiatives in science have called into question the most ordinary ways in which we have traditionally divided "science" into disciplines of physics, chemistry and biology. Currently, documents produced by the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics and endorsed by the Mathematics Council of the Alberta Teachers' Association present radically different standards for the teaching of mathematics.

None of these movements represent simple changes in content; none of them can be dismissed—or accepted—as old wine in new bottles. Each is so substantial a challenge to traditional thought and practice that they demand that educators at all levels call into question some of their most cherished ideas and practices. Changes in the structures of knowledge we are charged to teach are so dramatic that we can no longer side-step engagement with them. Yet so many of these changes arrive on people's desks as if they are unconnected from the history, experiences and feelings of those who will have to work most intimately with them. So many new curriculum initiatives require that teachers and principals relinquish important parts of what they thought the profession was all about. And

so few implementation strategies acknowledge the depth of support that teachers and principals need.

Thus, the question of "keeping up" is a complex one. How do educators keep up with even the superficial levels of change in content and resources? How do we come to understand substantive changes in subject matter and in teaching practices? How do we evaluate curriculum changes so that unfamiliarity with resources or with the organization of new curriculum documents does not become a reason for pushing substantive changes aside? How do we develop a sense of discrimination about changes so that we can tell the difference between innovations, materials and practices that are not very good and those that are just unfamiliar to us? Who can help us learn from the mistakes we will inevitably make as we learn new things? And how do we think about those in our midst who, like the grade two language teachers described earlier, just don't "want to know too much" about all of this, anyway?

Curriculum, Knowledge and Teacher Supervision

> In the same school there was a grade five teacher and I don't think I saw her smile once outside the staff room. Her classes were run in a very dull, uninteresting manner. The kids were basically told to sit down and shut up. I never heard anyone shout so much at kids. So in the end, I surplussed her—which didn't really solve the problem, and I didn't feel good about doing it, but somebody had to be surplussed anyway. . .

This principal's comments raise a related set of questions about the relationship between curriculum, knowledge and teacher supervision. He needed both support and knowledge in order to confront bad practice. Who can principals talk to about the curriculum issues that such teachers as these raise? When teachers insist on ordering workbooks and on duplicating sheet after sheet of exercises for

children to complete, principals need firm curriculum grounds on which to resist. When, day after day, students are compelled to live with tedium and anger—their own as well as their teachers'—principals must act.

Traditionally, the focus of concern has been that such teachers fall back on tight control—even shouting and coercion—to manage the boredom and rebelliousness. Anyone supervising such a teacher would be concerned about issues like management skills and classroom climate. Conversations with Calgary principals suggest that there is a deeper issue of the nature of knowledge and of children's access to it that is at work as well. In enforcing their power to compel children to "sit down and shut up," such teachers deny students the opportunity to explore, construct and communicate meaning. Yet just such opportunities are the identified heart of increasing numbers of Alberta curricula. Just such opportunities are the pulse of vibrant classrooms such as the one described by this principal:

> You would see children working in groups; you would see a lot of talk; you would see availability of resources; you would see children working on different projects at different times, and you would see a teacher with . . . a deep knowledge of curriculum.

Conclusion

Educators live with increasing public insistence that radical reform of educational thought and practice is needed if Canada is to move with confidence into the twenty-first century. Many people who have remained silent about education in general and curriculum in particular are now speaking up, demanding this or that specific reform of the profession. Increasingly, principals are called upon to engage in thoroughgoing discussion and debate about the questions this chapter raises. Responding with knowledge and sensitivity to these demands is a

formidable challenge. In turbulent times, it is small wonder that the discussion begins with more questions than answers, but it is in those very questions that our greatest hope for change and for learning reside.

Questions

1. Principals interviewed in this study expressed divergent views about their role in curriculum. As you reflect on your role, what knowledge base is necessary for informed curriculum leadership?

2. In what ways does the current Program of Studies reflect what you believe will be important if our young people are to meet the challenges of the 21st century?

3. What view of knowledge is embedded in the organizational practices of your school—scheduling/time-credit relationships/tracking/promotion policies/ assessment/staffing...

4. In what ways is the current Program of Studies responsive to the needs of young people, and whose view of these needs is predominant in decision making?

5. We are in an information era where textbooks may contain inaccurate information on publication. How do/should schools take a responsive leadership role in equipping young people for the challenges of adult life?

6. What are the implications of an information age for teacher preparation at both pre-service and inservice stages?

7. Given the complexities of curriculum decisions for the 1990s and beyond, what are the implications for supervisory practices—what knowledge of curriculum must principals hold if their supervisory practices are to support sustained improvements in learning and teaching?

Chapter 4

COLLEGIALITY: ISSUES OF CURRICULUM AND PROFESSIONAL RELATIONSHIPS

COLLEGIALITY: ISSUES OF CURRICULUM AND PROFESSIONAL RELATIONSHIPS

> One of the leadership components I think is... your human relationships with your staff—the trust, the confidence, the credibilities built.
>
> Junior High School Principal

Introduction

At base, educational leadership has to do with people: with getting to know them, working effectively with them, challenging—and being challenged by them—to do the very best on behalf of children and young people. Leadership has to do with developing relationships that inspire teacher and principal alike to commit their minds, hearts and spirits to the cause of educational growth. The marshalling of this energy and the management of adult relationships in a school has long been recognized as an important, and often very difficult, part of a principal's job. In educational administration, this part of leadership usually falls under the heading of "human resources." It encompasses issues such as personality types, leadership styles, climate, motivation, team building, conflict resolution, supervision, coaching, evaluation, mentoring and the change process. It is hardly ever seen as having anything to do with curriculum, with the fundamental purpose of education, and with important questions about knowledge, learning and teaching that demand thoughtful professional attention.

And yet here, as in the other aspects of the principalship that we have been exploring in this series of chapters, there is a clear need for an essential re-vision of what principals do and why they do it. For too long, good relationships in schools have been seen almost as ends in themselves. People have worked hard to build congenial staffs. It is a rare school that does not have a social committee

to ensure that teachers spend pleasant hours together outside the parameters of an ordinary working day. Major celebrations for children such as Hallowe'en and Christmas become the occasion for "secret Special Friends" among staff members. Birthday treats or department teas pick up everyone's spirits on busy days. All of this is part of the ordinary, pleasant routine of a school year. All of it helps ensure that teachers relax, have fun together, and feel included and recognized as individuals who work long, hard hours in their classrooms; who appreciate designated occasions and celebrations to balance the demands of their professional and their personal selves.

And yet, it is important to ask, is such congeniality enough? Is it even enough to go further—to bring in people to do personality inventories, team-building workshops, conflict-resolution sessions or consensus-seeking activities to ensure that teachers are on the side and pulling in the same direction? We all know that it **is** important that people in a school staff get along well. What is less clear is **why** it matters, and what "getting along" means in terms of emerging understandings of curriculum and the principalship. In this chapter, we introduce the idea that good relationships are the context within which serious dialogue about what counts in school can be conducted. It is not enough to think of congeniality as an important end in itself, as pleasant as many of the social events in a school calendar can be. It is not enough, either, to think of relationships as things that can be managed, taught or workshopped on behalf of smooth-running schools. Rather, when educators begin to think of curriculum inquiry as informed, sustained conversation between and among professionals, then genuinely collegial relationships come close to the very heart of the entire enterprise.

Conversational Possibilities

Emerging educational paradigms challenge current hierarchical structures in which principals maintain their distance from curriculum and from the messy, unpredictable reality of children's learning and teachers' daily lives. Increasing numbers of principals seek to establish and maintain a strong, educative interest in the daily experiences of children and teachers. They want to work with, as well as through the teachers on their staffs. Leading from among, rather than from above these teachers, such principals seek new ways to think about learning and teaching. Together with their staffs, they wrestle to define and to solve the educational problems that demand our best thought and action as the twentieth century draws to a close.

That is what some principals are striving to do. And yet, notes one, "everything about the way we structure schools and the way we view promotion works against understanding teaching as a collegial enterprise directed toward common ends." That is a strong statement, especially in these days when so much new rhetoric celebrates "authenticity," "collegiality," "voice," "dialogue," and "collaborative decision-making." It is almost as if, from the middle of a gathering educational parade, one principal has stood up to remind us that, in this regard at least, the Emperor still remains scandalously unclothed. New ways of thinking about teaching, learning and leadership are emerging, but they are by no means dominant. New questions about knowledge are being asked. These questions help us think differently about education, but they have only just begun to take definite shape, and educators are far from agreement about where to start finding the answers to them. Increasing numbers of principals seek new images of their authority to influence the daily experience of children and teachers in school. Rejecting the traditional exercise of power from above, they search for a new language of administration; one that grounds their authority in a consistent

understanding of learning within which to situate everything that happens in their schools. As promising as these beginnings are, there is much work still to do; work that must, of necessity, be carried out within hierarchical structures that are sometimes indifferent—and often hostile—to its shape and its needs.

Why is it so difficult for teachers and principals to talk seriously, as equals, about the work that they do together? There is no doubt that it is a difficult problem—one that invades principals' days and troubles their sleep as well:

> Sometimes you dream at night and you say, 'How could I bring this concept across; what could I do without pushing it so hard they will have their backs up, or so that they see the need?'

Teachers do not always welcome invitations to educational conversations about new and exciting matters—especially new and exciting matters defined by someone else. Years of experience in the classroom bring many teachers years of another kind of experience: bandwagons that come and go; promises made and broken; illusions of change created by hollow rhetoric. In the middle of an engaging conversation about his efforts to convince some staff members to try out new approaches to the teaching of writing, one principal warned that, on his staff at least, people needed first to be convinced that this innovation was here to stay. He saw his own trustworthiness tied up in his efforts to introduce a significant change to the school because, he said,

> there needs to be an element of credibility that what you're doing is not a bandwagon. Because I think teachers are starting to resent bandwagons: that we're going to do this and it will be gone next year and nothing will happen.

Many teachers have had enough of changes that others visit upon their lives. Getting wind of another "new and improved" brand of educational innovation, such teachers put their heads down and wait for the whole storm to blow over, as they sense it inevitably will. Or they get their backs up. Resisting from the outset, they remain unmoved by argument or persuasion, and their principals end up having dreams—or nightmares—about how to get them to open up and talk.

Another principal struggled with almost the opposite problem: not teachers' resistance to change, but their eagerness to latch on to the latest enthusiasms without sufficient reflection or analysis:

> I think we have to address issues in depth rather than on the surface, because you will see in the classroom some very good teachers who will use all of the latest techniques, the latest things: cooperative learning, planning, cooperative teaching, the whole bit, but deep down, you say something is lacking and you don't know, you cannot put your finger on it, and I think it's that.... it's that depth..."

There is much in the current structures of schools and of promotion that encourages people to play roles. Wanting to be seen as "in the know," some teachers and principals are anxious to be up on the latest talk, dropping names and titles into conversations in an effort to impress without having made the accompanying commitment actually to study, read, analyze and explore what all this new talk and thought might mean. Exchanging what one commentator described as "lumps of jargon," such people mistake easy talk for genuine dialogue. They create groups of insiders and outsiders according to who can—and cannot—swap the latest slogans and lingo, and they walk away from conversational exchanges having presented their latest selves, but having failed to touch their own and others' lives in any deep and significant way.

In either situation—resisting all change as bandwagon fads, or fighting to be first on-board for fear of being left behind in the dust—people's talk becomes curiously empty. Rather than opening up relationships, such conversation ritualizes them, assigning each player a role that he or she must perform to the end. This hollow emptiness is compounded by the fact that much educational talk takes place within hierarchical organizations in which lines of authority are clearly and deeply engrained: teachers work with children; administrators supervise the work of adults. In fundamental ways, the nature of the talk in schools is driven by this difference in roles and in status. Some principals continue to think of themselves as teachers, first and foremost, throughout their whole careers, but many do not. Something important gets lost in the claim "I am an educational administrator"; something that has to do with collegiality and a willingness to engage as equals in making schools better. In the exchange that follows, a principal and a member of the research group explore what happens on this principal's staff when he encounters a teacher who does not like what is happening in the school:

> *Principal:* ... the guy who sits in the staff room and says, 'Gee, I...' I call him in... I call him in and say, 'I understand you're not very happy. I'm here to make you happy.'
>
> *Interviewer:* What if they're just a renegade... [one] of these kinds of people that march to different drummers?
>
> *Principal:* I talk to them.
>
> *Interviewer:* They see your school differently than you see it. And they are still dead-on committed to kids. They know their subject areas and the stuff in the ways the principal is handling the school...
>
> *Principal:* I call them in and I talk to them.

> *Interviewer:* What do you say if they are one of your crackerjack teachers and they are still ....
>
> *Principal:* I tell them I hear everything they are saying, but they can't change my mind. And they have a choice. They can quit trying to change my mind, or they can be more tactful.

Understanding that many schools operate on the principle of "my way or the highway," large numbers of teachers give up on any effort to engage in debate and dialogue with their administrators. In such schools, conversational possibilities are defined by differences in status. There is little opportunity for dialogue among professionals equally committed to improving schools; to finding ways for children and teachers to live more fully in their classrooms and staff rooms. Teachers confined by such fences do quit trying to change anyone's mind. However, they seldom actually become more tactful.

What seems to happen, instead, is that they withdraw into themselves, go underground with their complaints, or sit passively by, waiting for someone to make decisions on their behalf. If an autocratic leader can stop conversation dead, so can a narrow, silent, sullen teacher:

> Teachers get so consumed with day-to-day difficulties as well as with successes, but they are frequently, frequently not prepared to contribute to the whole. But rather, they seem to get some therapeutic benefit from snapping at, you know... A few will come forward and have a good honest exchange, but most will not.

Educational Half-Lives

It is very hard for principals when their teachers do not see themselves as part of the whole staff, do not understand that the life of the school is more than the sum of ten or twenty or a hundred individual classrooms lined up side-by-side. One principal spoke of his frustration this way:

> There are some [teachers] that you put up with that are okay in the classroom; some even up to good in the classroom. But they contribute nothing good to the overall atmosphere of the school. They bother me because... they bother me from the point of view that they are cheapening themselves. Because unless you become part of the environment of the school, why be there? Go get a job in an office. So those people bother me.

In schools organized in traditional, hierarchical ways, principals set up structures for others—timetables, grade and subject assignments, teams, room allocations—but don't often work closely with the children and teachers who are most strongly influenced by those decisions. This administrative distance can create a curious kind of isolation, both for teachers, who come to see the parameters of their job as the boundaries established around their individual territory, and for principals, who do not have to live on a daily basis with the consequences of the decisions they make on others' behalf. Thus, many teachers and administrators live shadowy half-lives with each other in school, confined to narrow worlds that make authentic, collegial conversation almost impossible. It is as if there is not quite enough space for people to come alive, to live fully.

Choosing to close their classroom doors and just get on in private with teaching the children and youth in their care, many teachers are genuinely frightened to share their work with other adults. They don't want colleagues in to observe

them, and they see visits by administrators as occasions for judgement. Lacking genuine connections with other professionals who care—and know—enough to explore their practice with them, such teachers construct walls from the bricks and mortar of their fears and anxiety. They become caught in a cruel double bind. Sensing that their lack of involvement is regarded as both a personal and professional failing, they often find it difficult to talk about the very tensions that feed that isolation. Instead, they get caught up in doing more and more of exactly what causes the tensions they are afraid, then, to speak about.

Tensions, dissonance and problems can be enormously creative when people can talk, explore, find solutions together; when, in fact, they become the opportunities for dialogue. Unhealthy tension comes from knowing that what you are doing isn't right, but keeping silent about it. If tensions never become externalized, never become part of a caring dialogue, they become debilitating rather than energizing. They cripple the possibility of good work, good feelings and good relationships. One principal spoke wistfully about a teacher whom he knew felt lonely and isolated in this way. He tried, gently, to get this person more involved on staff,

> and... it [wasn't] anything more than informal times in the staff room, when there was a conversation of some sort. You're sitting beside that person and trying to encourage them to say something or do something... Bring them in just to be part of it because I think the person was well aware they weren't becoming a part of the staff, and that probably affected their teaching, too.

As modest as he knew his efforts to be, they were more than this teacher could handle, so great was her sense of fear and isolation.

Creating Spaces: Problems and Possibilities

Engagement and reflection that rest on shared educational interests, concerns and knowledge rather than on differences in role and status hold far more promise to create the space teachers and administrators need to get to know each other better as people and as teachers. Some principals described ways of participating differently in the conversation with their staffs. One said,

> ...we are doing at the school a round-table once every two weeks on reading and writing. So one of the things we have looked at is journal writing. What is a journal? What is journal writing? How can we really have some impact on that for the students? And everyone—it's a round table—and everybody has the answers. We have articles we share; we have three people that can do writing process, so we talk about their experiences as well. We bring books and we're sharing.

Two things mark this description of the professional dialogue on this staff. The first is its shared nature. All participants bring books, articles and questions. Everyone—not just the principal—has questions and answers. The expertise of teachers who are actually **doing** the work is a valued resource, not simply teaching practices held up for another's scrutiny and evaluation. Second, the conversation is about curriculum; about the specifics of learning and teaching. In order to participate as equals, the principal and the teachers must be able to explore the role of language in learning, the use of response journals in various subject areas, the role of the teacher-pupil dialogue in creating shared understandings. All participants in an educational dialogue about journals must be familiar with the ways in which subject matter is organized in curricula in order to assess the impact of writing to learn as well as learning to write. Thus, if the talk were to move into the heady areas of using journals in mathematics and science, a

principal-participant would want to be able to follow and contribute in an informed way, not just about journals, but also about the nature and the development of authentically mathematical and scientific thinking.

Exploring the opportunities for this kind of conversation between teachers and administrators, the same principal described a study group that meets in the evening, in addition to the work they do as staff members on professional development days:

> This one we have left optional and we say we're going to provide the following things. You can come in, pop in. In fact, attendance is not compulsory... and this is what we will be covering at this time and we'll pick it up from the last conversation. Sometimes we say we will be discussing this and it doesn't turn out like that, and it's fine. It's beautiful when that happens because we discuss an issue. And strangely enough, they hear about it because the following day in the staff room, in the little staff room we have, 'Oh, do you know this happened last night? We discussed that and there was a good article.'
>
> And so I believe the principal has a responsibility to bring in topics of conversations that are educational in the staff room. At times you don't but you have a responsibility to do that so you make your staff think. Even if you just mention a few things—'By the way, I just read this article and I'll just leave it here, you know, for perusal...' So it's talks like that...

Frustrated by the lack of substance in much staff room conversation, this principal has deliberately set about to influence the educational talk in the building, not by coercion, not by bringing in experts to fix a supposed problem with the teachers, not by delegating dialogue to others. Instead, she invited teachers to share her

own professional reading, knowing that if teachers found the articles and talk to be genuinely engaging and useful, word would pass to others who might also want to join in. Recognizing that, as the principal, she had a special responsibility to create opportunities for significant conversation in her school, she was also willing to participate as an equal in the educational dialogue she hoped would ensue. She did not hide behind her desk or her role. Instead, she chose to sit shoulder to shoulder with teachers as colleagues equally concerned about both the big questions and the small details of their work together.

Principals who are exploring how to work in more collegial ways with teachers sometimes find the going very difficult. As we have seen, relationships moulded to fit hierarchical organizations can paralyse many teachers' efforts to break out of their individual isolation. But the very confines of relationships defined primarily by role can also carve comfortable, easy grooves that teachers come to expect and to enjoy. Not all teachers welcome the opportunity to be part of a dialogue, to participate in collaborative decision-making, or to break new ground. Many are intractable in their desire to be told what to do, what is expected, what the rules are. This doesn't mean that they always **do** what they are told; it just means that they can go back to their rooms, knowing fully what it is they are now going to complain about or ignore. For these teachers, attempts to leave enough space for their input and ideas are interpreted as weakness. Says one principal, such teachers

> ... don't want to be involved in the decision-making there is at the school. They want to be told and then they'll agree... or disagree. But if they don't get told, they feel very uncomfortable... How do you communicate this whole idea of responsibility in a way that doesn't leave them feeling that this guy doesn't know which end is up?

Principals anxious to accelerate the pace of reform efforts in their schools find such resistance extremely frustrating. Dealing with it consumes enormous amounts of their personal and professional energy, and the impact of such teachers cannot be ignored in efforts to understand more fully the problems and possibilities inherent in improving collegial relationships in schools.

However unable or unwilling some teachers are to break down the walls that separate them from their colleagues, there are others who are just as anxious to be rid of the debilitating tensions created when they find they must go outside their own schools for coherent talk about education. It is not only teachers who take comfort in familiar ruts. Sometimes principals do as well, and sometimes teachers interested in genuine educational reform find themselves holding the open secrets that organizations try hard to conceal. Attempting to speak up about what is not working in public education in general or in their schools in particular, such teachers sometimes find themselves cruelly silenced: if you can't–if you won't–do what we ask, it's because you're not one of the good ones. And yet Smyth (1989) has pointed out that

> The passivity and subservience implicit in this essentially hierarchical view of leadership [must be] questioned, and the counter-argument presented that in the interests of democratic schooling, teachers must reclaim their rightful leadership role by continually raising critical questions about the social, cultural, political and moral nature of their work. (p. 180)

In hierarchical organizations, people more committed to the status quo than to dialogue and informed conversation often become very angry with–and frightened by–those who challenge decisions made by others above them. Such challenges are frequently heard as disloyal, as wholly negative, as symptomatic of an inability

to see the whole picture or to be a team player. So pervasive has this sporting image become that we frequently fail to examine its implications for education. "Playing on the team" gives one lens through which to view collegial work in schools. It highlights the need to develop individual skills and the need to work together to achieve a common goal. However, the "team" image obscures other important aspects of teachers' work together. The point of being on a squad is to defeat one's opponents in competition. Who are the opponents in the educational tournament? Some teachers who have dared, over the years, to challenge and to criticize on behalf of children feel that they, themselves, have become cast as the opposition. And yet as Grob (cited in Smyth, 1989) has pointed out

> ... leadership, more than any other kind of human activity, must demand of its practitioners a willingness to open themselves to critique... leadership must be born–and perpetually sustained–in the movement to turn back upon itself and establish its own credentials... insofar as leadership is the work of humans who are moral agents–it must root itself in humility. (p. 183)

If the virtue of collegial relationships lies in being on side, playing the same game by the same rules, where is the space for the tough questions that drive a living system forward? Collegiality which creates insiders and outsiders according to their ability–or disposition–to play on what is seen to be the same side fails to recognize the importance, in any school or district, of creating organizational space for renegades. A fundamental question about the health of a system lies in how it treats its non-conformists. Does it cast them aside, willing to risk the loss of good teachers who become bitter, angry and locked into places where they are ineffectual? Or does it consciously cultivate the energy of such people to run counter to the grain? A deeply educative culture would understand that going against the grain is, in some ways, a profoundly necessary part of the overall

health and sanity of the organization–and an essential component of educational progress.

It is impossible to build a truly coherent educational enterprise unless there are committed people always asking hard questions and shaking up the complacent. And these people are difficult to deal with. We don't always welcome their questions. Indeed, the closer to the bone the challenges come, the stronger is the urge to eliminate the people who ask them. But these questions, these people, are critical if we are to remain clear-headed. Even with conscious effort to keep one's eye firmely fixed on the important issues in any school, one principal said,

> ...it's very easy to get–not to get focused, and I don't know if it's me or other people, but I find that you have to make an effort to keep focused on why you're here basically.

In terms of our working relationships, we sometimes substitute a superficial congeniality for genuine respect for another's identity and stance as an educator. The whole purpose of having relationships on staff is to further other, more important educational purposes. Members of staff need collegial relationships **because of** the work that they do together, not as an escape from it. In many schools, we have erected artificial boundaries between the private and the personal. Seeking human connection and warmth from each other, we turn conversation into party games, having teachers come to early-morning meetings in their pyjamas or making collages of staff baby pictures.

Professionals are supposed to keep their private and personal lives separate. In traditional organizations, failure to strictly govern the distance between the two is regarded as a source of trouble. Informally, however, people have always known that the "official" culture of schools can be cold and heartless without an infusion of

the individual heart and spirit that gives meaning to the work we do. The emerging paradigm of educational leaderships calls for new images of schools inspirited by the uniqueness of each individual and the power of their authentic relationships. People are reaching out, trying to figure out how to break down some of the barriers between their private and their public selves, but are going about it in a funny sort of way. Instead of bringing baby pictures into the staff room, we might–following Smyth (1989)–regard leadership as the process of "making activity meaningful for others." (p. 181) According to Smyth, leadership is

> ... providing others with a sense of understanding where they have come from, what they are doing, and where they are headed; it [leadership] amounts to construing action so that people can extract meaning from it and communicate about those meanings. Generating knowledge in a social context, such as this, enables meanings to be viewed as social artifacts capable of being exchanged, talked about, modified and amplified. (p. 181)

Understand this way, collegiality says that we dwell in this place together because we do our public work together. How we know each other and who we are to each other takes on a particular kind of life and energy that can be duplicated nowhere else.

Teachers live together in their schools for eight or more hours a day, 200 days a year. They do difficult work with children, their parents and with each other. When they truly come to know each other as professionals, teachers are better able to engage in the conversations such work entails: to challenge each other, to ask hard questions with sensitivity, to search for new ways of thinking, talking and acting. People genuinely engaged in seeking better educational answers do not

use honesty as an excuse to be cruel and hurtful, nor do they use weakness as a call to be cossetted and looked after. Rather, within the context of developing relationships, honest discussion leads all participants to a deeper level of understanding what they do together on behalf of children.

Discussing how to cultivate this depth of dialogue, principals noted that they seem to get much better talk when they cross teams, disciplines, grade groups, and subjects. When people cling to their usual groups, all the old constraints and complaints surface. Circles can become so closed that the possibilities for new thinking are lost. One principal explained it this way:

> ...If you can get teachers talking about kids and learning in a setting that is not to do with their regular assignment, that they'll be quite insightful about thing they know about Piaget. They know his stuff and they'll say, 'You know, we agree with that. That's fine.' You put a group of Math teachers from a particular school and... they are immediately constrained by the constraints of their assignment. You know, classic 8B...

There is a sense of possibility present in mixed groups that can be lost in the details of familiar work and familiar people. Solving real problems together—problems that educators hold in common despite apparent differences in their situations—people seem able to unfreeze old structures, old pathways, old roles and relationships. Unfortunately, most of our images of being "practical" are tied to familiar, usual ways of doing things. "Well, let's get practical now," seems to bring us back to old methods, old solutions. Constrained once again in their talk, groups can become frustrated with tasks and with each other.

Here is what we think is happening in these situations: when people lack the imagination or courage to go forward, they are tempted to slide back to what is

familiar. Perhaps, when people develop genuinely collegial relationships, they can ask new questions about what makes sense, about action, about problems. They seem to develop faith that they will eventually work through difficult issues together, even when they sometimes become upset with each other. In order to maintain these kinds of professional relationships, people remain fully centred in themselves, but govern that centredness in order to cultivate trust and understanding with others.

Hard Truths

If, however, collegiality comes to mean only congeniality; if "voice" means not only all voices in a conversation are heard, but also that all points of view are held to be equally valuable, there is a real danger of constructing a totally incoherent educational picture on a staff. If principals build consensus from where people are—but where they are is a place that lacks educational depth and purpose—then there are big problems. Staffs such as these are easily seduced by satisfaction, by smugness:

> ... and now how do you deal with that when people are out there presumably doing a fine job and everything's well, how do you begin to talk about what could be—are these kids learning as well as they might? ... That's what I find the most difficult thing to deal with in a school....
>
> We've been into the celebration mode... for a long time, and I think that's appropriate because we have to celebrate good stuff. But I think what we've tended to do is to generalise from a few and say..., 'Well, yes, these are... Look at all this exciting stuff going on... Therefore all is well in the kingdom.' And it isn't.

> We've had difficulty coming to terms with some of these half-truths and because we are so embedded into this celebration, a lot of the time when hard truths are raised, people get very uncomfortable about that and they start raising questions like, 'Well, where's the evidence?'
>
> All I'm saying is that in a measured and cautious way we have to be careful that we... don't... start talking celebration at the expense of hard truths. And I'm saying we've got to err a little more now on the side of hard truths and that has to be said by people who are going to be listened to—more than it has been, anyway.

One hard truth is that dialogue is not always comfortable. Language is necessarily ambiguous. People can use the same words, talk the same talk and think they are in agreement about fundamentals. That is, perhaps, one of the reasons that cross-group talk often sounds so exhilarating and full of promise: people seem to share the same frameworks, the same questions, the same concerns. But it's only when talk gets down to the details, when people ask more questions, seek clarification and examples that the taken-for-granted agreement becomes very problematic and that the genuine differences in meanings and understandings become evident.

Perhaps all of us need to help each other understand that this is not failure; it is part of dialogue. Talk that becomes both deep and specific is not always cheery, and it doesn't always feel good. People have to be prepared, as one principal said, to "squirm a little bit"; to "experience some dissonance." Sometimes when people seek clarification and greater understanding, they discover that they no longer like what they have heard. How to lead such talk so that people maintain both their heart and their relationships is a significant, if subtle, leadership issue.

Principals who are content to be good managers know that they will sometimes make people upset with their management decisions along the way. However, they don't touch that fundamental anger that comes when you really cause people to examine what they do. Perhaps this explains why so much educational talk seems terminally polite. It demands energy, knowledge, commitment and courage to get past the stage of finding the ways that everybody can be seen to be in agreement.

Perhaps it has to be acknowledged right up front that there is another, more important stage. Relationships and dialogue require individuals to see past their personal beliefs, dispositions and habits to forge a common commitment to more educative possibilities for children. People who set out on this voyage cannot expect clear sailing. There may be major disagreements as they work through important questions and issues. In this work, unending politeness can actually stand in the way of progress. Yet we have a tendency to think that it is the polite, compliant person who is the more acceptable one, the team player, the good staff member.

Conclusion

In the Summer, 1992 edition of *Teachers College Record*, Eisner says this of the condition to which children and youth have been reduced by schooling:

> Students typically have few opportunities to formulate their own questions and to pursue them. They are expected to do what the teacher requests; their role is in the application of means rather than the formulation of ends. They become... deskilled, unable to formulate the aims and goals they seek to attain.

> The provision of opportunities for students to define at least some of their purposes is arguably an important educational aim and the ability to do so an important educational achievement (p. 624).

What he says here of students may also be said of people in a traditional, hierarchical structure who find themselves downstream of educational policy initiatives. Principals governed by the current paradigm of administrative thinking monitor the delivery of curricula designed by others. Teachers search for pedagogical means rather than participate in lively and important dialogue about fundamental ends. Students receive the education that is designed for them rather than claim one that they have had a strong hand in shaping. That is how it has gone in the past, and that is how curriculum, teaching and administration continue to go for many, today.

However, some voices ask new questions, define new issues and seek different places at the table of educational reform. Calling for changes in the lived experience of teachers and principals in schools, increasing numbers of educators search for ways to bring new relationships and conversations into being. These changes are as exhilarating as they are sometimes frightening. But, substituting a single word in Eisner's claim, the provision of opportunities for educators to define at least some of their purposes is arguably an important educational aim and the ability to do so an important educational achievement. Presenting new possibilities for the adults in schools to dwell together more fully, more richly, more authentically, such changes also hold out important possibilities for thinking about new ways of being with the children and young people in our care. For how can we make available to students authentically educative conversations and relationships unless we have experienced them already for ourselves?

There is no doubt, in these troubled times, that the need for such changes presses hard upon us. It is not often that the last word on educational reform is left to principals, but one of them says it best:

> ***Principal:*** And I think you will always have restrictions and I think you have to live with them, so when you look at that you don't become too depressed and you say, 'Well, let's see... This is what we have, and let's work with that now.'
>
> But sometimes you just want your wings to fly out of that box...
>
> ***Interviewer:*** And see what you could do?
>
> ***Principal:*** And see what you could do. Exactly.

Questions

1. In your own context, consider the means by which congenial and collegial relationships are fostered. Is the achieved balance consistent with sustained improvement? By what means are genuinely collegial relationships enhanced?

2. In a recent Canadian Administrator, November 1992, Doug Knight challenges us to examine our understanding of collaborative leadership. He suggests that such leadership is "embedded in moral authority" where "the intent is to provide opportunities for learning both individually and organizationally, and to create an environment in which everyone gains." Further, partners in collaborative endeavours have an "equal sense of responsibility for the outcomes of the effort." In what ways do your experiences of collaborative leadership meet these criteria?

3. In his essay, *The Bird in the Window,* Hawkins speaks of authority as demanding a particular kind of responsibility, one that is based in genuine care and that draws upon experience and expertise. Authority then, in Hawkins' conceptualization, engenders respect and a valuing of the contribution that one with authority can make to the existence of others. In this sense, "authority is a prime source of learning." As we try to flatten our hierarchical organizations, to encourage others to share leadership, how do we understand our authority as the formal (i.e. designated) leader in the school? What must inform that authority?

4. How do we both resist the latest bandwagon yet encourage openness to innovation, to new ways of thinking about practice?

5. What ways are successful in engaging disillusioned colleagues in significant educative conversations?

6. Principals who are committed to participatory decision-making often report that they are seen by some colleagues as "wishy-washy" and that their decision-making models are necessarily "messy." Sarah Lawrence Lightfoot remarks that collaboration is time-consuming, but that the results are well worth the effort. In what ways might colleagues, including superintendents, support principals endeavouring to initiate more collegial approaches?

7. Currently there is increasing talk about schooling as an exercise in democratic living. What are the implications for school leadership, for classroom leadership, for community involvement?

8. Are prevailing concepts of loyalty and of being a team player antithetical to educational inquiry directed toward sustained improvement? If so, how might we seek to understand concepts of loyalty and collegiality in new ways?

9. What does Groh's conception of "leadership as moral agency" commit us to?

10. If there is some truth in the assertion that the unreasonable person is the agent of change, how do we as school leaders support our "unreasonable" colleagues in ways that enhance sustained improvement?

11. How do we help build work environments in which the hard questions can surface without fear of sanction and without curtailing important educational conversation?

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Chapter 5

DEEP PURPOSE: TOWARDS AN UNDERSTANDING OF THE NATURE OF EDUCATIONAL RELATIONS

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> One of the things we have to do is to address issues in depth rather than on the surface, because you can see some apparently very good teachers in the classroom who use all the latest things such as cooperative learning, planning principles, team teaching—the whole bit—but deep down you say something is lacking and yet you don't know what, you can't put your finger on it. I think what is lacking is a certain kind of depth ...
>
> Elementary School Principal

Surface Versus Depth

The issue of depth (or what we have chosen to refer to in this chapter as the deep purpose of schooling) is an issue that found its way into most if not all of our discussions of the principals' texts. It was an issue for us because it was first of all an issue for the principals. Of all the issues we had to deal with, this was the most intractable and difficult issue because it seemed to us to underlie most, if not all of the other problems and difficulties that surfaced during the research. And while we cannot claim to have "solved" this problem, what we can do is put forward some of our thinking on this issue in order to show where we are coming from and perhaps prompt others to analyze their own thinking on this question.

We have chosen to begin with the above quote from an elementary school principal because it seemed to us symptomatic of the concerns we heard as we listened to the voices of the principals. The suggestion that "something is lacking" was an idea that struck the research group quite forcibly. Although we did not pursue what this "something" might be (that would be another study), we had no difficulty identifying in a general way with what this principal was saying.

We too wondered to what extent the constant proliferation of novel strategies and innovative techniques were contributing to a general disorientation of teachers towards their central mission: the education and welfare of the young.

We realize, of course, that we are in difficult territory with this question. It is not easy to say with any kind of certainty just what is missing or how "deep" we need to go. And yet we are equally convinced that it is easy to stay on the surface and deal simply at the level of the external manifestations of things, or worse yet to imagine that the surface is all there is. In our discussions, one of the many things we pondered was whether support exists for principals who might wish to probe beneath the surface and help reconnect teachers with the pedagogic character of their work as teachers.

In saying this, however, we are cognizant of the many difficulties and impediments that stand in the way of making schooling more educational. For one thing the tide of contemporary video-culture runs close to the surface much of the time making the search for depth an enormously challenging task. It is not easy to raise the hard questions dealing with the purpose of schooling or the nature of adult-child relations without appearing to be hopelessly naive or outmoded. And yet these were the type of questions uppermost on the minds of several of the principals we spoke to. As a research group, we were concerned about the loss of these questions within the wider educational community (and, we would add parenthetically, in the culture more broadly).

One consequence of this research is that we have come to see the issue of surface versus depth as one of considerable importance for educators. We agree wholeheartedly with the principal (quoted above) that one of the things we have to do is to address issues in depth rather than on the surface, and so the critical

question becomes, how to tell the difference between these two things. How can we begin to see surface as surface and as something we need to get beyond?

Clearly there are no simple answers to such a question. Another consequence of our research is that we have become leery of the "quick-fix" as a solution to the problems and difficulties in which we find ourselves. And yet we recognize how "quick-fixes" (and we would include in this category the current crop of re-form and re-structuring proposals of various kinds) are tempting options in so far as they hold out largely technical solutions to the problems that beset us. However, as the research proceeded, we became less and less sure that the "problems" the principals were alluding to are of this technical or organizational kind. In this regard, we think it is important to listen to what other principals have to say on this point. We begin with comments from one of the participating principals.

> I don't think the first step is, "well here is the Provincial curriculum, now how are we going to implement this?" That question has its place, but there are prerequisite steps such as going back to our fundamental purpose which is rooted in our common sense as professional educators ... and we don't necessarily need text books to get the right answers...
>
> I don't want to sound as if I've got all the answers because I haven't; but I do think that over time schools generally have lost sight of their knitting; I think teachers generally are into a survival mode a lot of the time, and also in an isolation mode which means they have lost sight of what they are there for...
>
> Probably the biggest problem is that people just will not come to grips with the essence of the problem. I believe they tend to look at the trappings all the time and constantly miss the main point. And again, because I don't happen to

> have a nice pat answer I can give, people will start picking away again.

As a research group, we found these comments striking. What they reveal to us is a portrait of a principal struggling to author a grasp of what fundamentally motivates us as educators. The task is difficult not least because we think it requires a certain courage to begin to raise the tough questions that nonetheless need to be asked. And while "courage" is not a popular word in the research literature on leadership, we had no qualms about using it in this study in regard to the work we think needs to be done in schools. In fact this was one area where we thought the research literature lets us down quite badly. It seemed to us that in its overwhelming preoccupation with questions of efficiency and effectiveness, the mainstream literature on leadership tends to neutralize the moral quality inherent in all acts of true leadership.

Going Beyond the Trappings

But the principal's words are important in other ways. The suggestion that we need to go back to our "fundamental purpose" as educators, that teachers have generally "lost sight" of what they are there for, and that our "biggest problem" is not being able to see past the "trappings" are, if true, symptomatic of some kind of malaise affecting education. The principal's words provoked us to wonder whether a degree of humility and collective self-doubt might not be a healthy corrective to the self-congratulatory mode that often seems to prevail. It also seemed that the principal's comments pointed us in the direction of more fine-grained thinking. Significantly, at no time did the research group feel inclined to dismiss these concerns as simply the idiosyncratic murmurings of an unhappy principal. We listened long and hard to what this principal had to say. And we

had no difficulty identifying quite closely with the gist of this principal's message. Much more difficult was to know what to do or how to respond to such concerns.

In fact it was easier for us to reach agreement on the kind of response we felt would constitute a non-response. The very last thing needed in our view was the development of yet another "program" as the way to deal with the "lack of depth" problem. The desire to develop new programs, wherewith to address and hopefully alleviate this or that problem of practice, seems to be the almost automatic response of system programmers and provincial policy-makers to real or perceived "problems" in education. Yet from our perspective, the trouble with programmatic responses is that they treat the problem as if it were a localized problem rather than a problem of deep-seated proportions which underwrites and co-determines the enterprise as a whole. As we listened to their comments, we did not think the principals were talking about just another curricular or instructional problem but about something more basic and fundamental. Somehow a value shift is involved here. Although difficult to put into words, one principal expressed it this way:

> If we believe that the school is the unit of change then you cannot start off at the central office level but rather with the local school which has, we assume, a certain purpose it's trying to achieve for its kids and only that school and its people truly know those kids and the rest of the [central office] people are there to help the school achieve its purpose ... it's that fundamental shift that is missing. It has to come from the top and yet it's not a top-down enclosed thing, rather it's a certain mentally that has to change and it can only happen if it starts coming from the senior people.

Another principal commented:

> I'm pulling away from techniques and strategies because I think teachers can find their own techniques to deal with this or that problem. I'm coming back to the centrality of values.

We think these are significant statements because they point a direction and articulate a belief system different from that to which we have become inured over time. These are not the familiar appeals for *more* leadership but for *different* leadership; we will try to articulate our perceptions of the nature of this difference and why we think it is an important shift to make.

Part of the problem we see is that without a beginning grasp of the deep purpose of education, teaching practices can easily be denuded of meaning and significance. We think this is likely what the principals are alluding to. When this happens teaching tends to get defined as "delivering the curriculum" or "implementing a service" as if either one of these could be considered equal to what the task of education requires of us. We doubt that anyone entered teaching just to "deliver the curriculum" or thought of themselves as part of a public service delivery system, and yet we sense that pressures to define teaching in this way do exist. Principals, clearly are not immune from such influence. As a research group, we were somewhat taken aback by the comment of one principal who stated that curricula in his school were exclusively provincial curricula and that "... we don't invent much curriculum; we may invent different ways to deliver it or enrich it but we don't invent it."

It seems to us that curricular conceptions that see teaching as more or less equivalent with "delivering the curriculum" shade quickly into a view of students as the "consumers" of "educational services." Today it is not uncommon to hear

principals speak of students as "clients" and to employ market-oriented terminology to describe the nature of the educational process. In the case of the principal quoted above, students were described as educational consumers "who either shop at K-Mart or they shop at the Bay." In a market-driven, market-oriented economy, perhaps there is a certain appeal and even a degree of commonsense logic to such descriptions. And yet from our perspective, market-place language (teachers as providers of services versus students as consumers of services) is not an especially helpful language for educators. We see educational relations as altogether different from commercial relations in a number of important respects. Nonetheless, as a research group, we could see the appeal of market-place thinking, with its easily graspable objectives and relatively straightforward mechanisms, as a way of reducing or avoiding much of the difficulty and complexity that inheres in every attempt to confront education in a pedagogically responsible way. We are convinced that an issue of leadership exists here. A principal who is truly a principal understands that the challenge and difficulty of educating children and young people cannot be absolved through simple-minded economic analogies that place education on a false footing. The following comment by one of the participating principals reveals something of the necessary tension that underlies all truly educative acts.

> I'm convinced that we don't think hard enough about the real essence of leadership. Most of the time we concern ourselves with peripherals like the timetable. Frankly, I don't give a damn about the timetable. I mean it can be important and maybe it can make a difference but its not the core. If you have the fanciest timetable in the world but if it makes no difference to what's going on in the classroom, who cares? I'm taking about a certain shift we have to make. I'm talking about our ability to reflect upon what we are doing and try as hard as we can to bring to bear the knowledge we have from our own knowledge base

> to the difficult task of educating young adolescents.

As a research group, we were drawn to these comments because we sense they reveal a certain thoughtfulness concerning the difficult task of teaching. One senses that for this principal educating young adolescents goes far beyond instruction in the formal curriculum. We agree; and furthermore we have come to believe that part of the essence of leadership has to do with the question what is left over; that is, what remains of the educational task when a justified concern for the formal curriculum reaches its natural end. And that in itself is a good question: what is the nature of the educational task we are called upon to perform? In this research, we have not allowed ourselves to rest content with conventional answers to this question which we take to be a central and critical question for all serious-minded educators.

In the following sections, we try to articulate how we came to regard the notion of deep purpose as an important issue for educators. The fact that in the end we were unable to offer a final and definitive statement on this issue should not be read as a limitation of our approach to research but as a way of opening up a space for conversation, or as one member of the research group expressed it, our way of beginning the dialogue.

From "Delivering the Curriculum" to a Concern for Educational Relations

Part of the problem, it seems to us, is that a great deal of contemporary thinking on education is heavily focused on issues related to the "delivery" aspects of curriculum. We worry somewhat that in our desire to develop efficient "systems" of education—local or provincial—there is always the danger of losing sight of what the systems are intended to serve. Issues of policy and administration for

instance, tend to focus almost exclusively at the level of the "system" of education. Concerns at this level tend to utilize "global" thinking and to focus on broad-based issues such as standards, accountability, and equity, among others. Although important, the trouble with such "systemic" thinking is that it runs the risk of glossing the living reality of particular children encountering particular teachers in particular classrooms. It is this very particularity that is—or should be—of concern to us as educators. If nothing else, this research has served to remind us how education always takes place in situations that are immediate, local and contingent. Policy initiatives and planning efforts that ignore this truism are unlikely to succeed.

As used in this study "deep purpose" was the term used to reference that certain ability to grasp at least in a beginning way the fundamental nature of educational relations. Although an entire study could be devoted to an examination of this important aspect of education, all we can offer at this time are a few brief thoughts on this topic.

The most we can say at this point is that the concept of the *educational relation* lies at or close to the heart of the educational and teaching process. Teaching is first and foremost a *relational* activity in which the quality of "relatedness" between the teacher and her or his charges is the truly decisive factor. Although it is inordinately difficult and perhaps impossible to specify completely the contours or shape of this relation suffice it to say that it is characterized by a set of mostly tacit intentions on the part of the adult (teacher) which have as their object the overall welfare, growth and maturation of the young person. This, it seems to us, is the overarching pedagogic function of schooling within which educators' legitimate concerns for the formal curriculum including the acquisition of subject-matter knowledge have to be subsumed. This makes the educational relation a particular and quite deliberate relation in which something is intended

on the part of the adult vis-a-vis the child. In so far as this "something" involves the attempt on the part of the adult to make contact with the emotional and psychic life of the child, the relation is certainly a moral relation.

From our perspective, the concept of the educational relation adds meaning to the notion of "deep purpose" around which so much of our research discussions revolved. The concept is an important one because it begins to draw attention away from grand policy and large-scale administrative issues towards concerns that are more profoundly educational, and we would add, more deeply satisfying.

In one of the few books[6] to address the issue of "deep purpose" author Max van Manen speaks of the need for a "new pedagogy" responsive to the historical and cultural circumstances in which we find ourselves and in which children are expected to grow up—indeed they have no choice. Because his words have meaning for us—and we hope for others also—we quote them at length in this section.

> Unlike the ages when one knew, by being born in a particular social niche, what one was expected to become, whom one could count on, what one could do, present-day children must live with uncertainty. They must make active choices in their lives for fear of not becoming anything or anyone. The modern child must realize that he or she is born into a condition of possibilities. He or she is the body of possibilities. To become a person, to grow up and to become educated, is to transform one's contingency into commitment, responsibility—one must choose a life. *This means that the vocation of pedagogy, of being educationally*

[6] See "The Tact of Teaching" by M. van Manen, published by The Althouse Press, 1991. The University of Western Ontario, London, ON, 1991.

involved with children, is to empower children to give active shape to their life's contingencies. (Tact, p.3)

...the child is in a real sense the agent of his or her own destiny—at both the individual and the social level. So a new pedagogy of the theory and practice of living with children must know how to stand in a relationship of thoughtfulness and openness to children and young people rather than being governed by traditional beliefs, discarded values, old rules, and fixed impositions. The pedagogy of living with children is an ongoing project of renewal in a world that is constantly changing around us and that is continually being changed by us. (Tact, p.3)

Compared to their parents and grandparents, young people today live in a severely fractured world—families are less stable, divorce has become commonplace, neighbourhoods tend to be in more flux and less community-minded, schools are less personal and more competitive, and peer groups set up conflicting loyalties. Moreover, television, radio, newspapers, and other media rush images of adulthood into the living space of young children—images beset with violence, sexuality, drugs, global crises and conflict. Many parents and educators feel uneasy about the frenzied, intensely eroticized icons of some music videos on the developing minds and bodies of young viewers. They believe that children prematurely see and experience too much in our consumer-oriented, information-based, and advertising-driven culture. Technology, in the form of computers, video, and other communication innovations, also radically alters the modalities of modern living. Aspects of adult life that previously remained secret from children until they had mastered more sophisticated reading levels and until they had obtained access to more mature literature now have become dominant themes of the lives of children. This has led some educators to suggest that *the boundaries*

> *between childhood and adulthood are eroding and that childhood itself, in its development phases, may be disappearing.* (Tact, p.2).

Part of the notion of "deep purpose" we are struggling to articulate requires us to read the historical and cultural circumstances in which we find ourselves in a pedagogically responsible way. This has always been part of the task of teaching intuitively recognized by knowledgeable teachers and thoughtful principals. Speaking from the vantage point of junior high school, one of the participating principals commented as follows:

> I've got this strong feeling that the curriculum in the junior high school is inappropriate for the way these kids are and that we fight and struggle because of it when we could be creating a much more flexible environment and concentrating on developing a sense of responsibility in kids, character development and the like... we are constantly looking at the kid and saying "what is wrong?" and essentially blaming the kid—he doesn't study, he doesn't work, he comes from a poor home environment, he can't get along with his peers (poor socialization skills), he is having a difficult time growing up and so on. But we seldom look at ourselves and ask what's wrong with us *or see these things as requiring action on our part*. Now you ask me what kind of curriculum should be there in school and I don't have an answer that I can fire off at you.

Returning for a moment to the work of van Manen, we think that the following quotations offer insights into the predicament in which we find ourselves at this point in history. We think they are instructive for the work of teachers and other educators.

> Living at the turn of a new millennium poses unforseen and unforeseeable challenges to parents and to teachers and other professional educators. This does not mean, of course, that we should dismiss or abandon every valued cultural construction that appears presently under seige. For example, in a new age of commercialized social mores and more fluid interpersonal relations, the family has experienced difficulty maintaining its former cohesiveness. This does not mean that the more close-knit familial structure is or was wrong and that we should give up on the idea that children need, if possible, a mother and a father, as well as other kin relations, all playing active roles in the child's journey to adulthood. A new pedagogy must face the challenge of change *but also be prepared to defend, or reconstruct in new forms, values and value frameworks that growing up seems to require.* (Tact, p.4)

> Of course, life will be carried into the twenty-first century by new realities and new visions. Some of these realities will be exciting and positive experiments in human living. But we must recognize also that spheres of human intimacy increasingly come under strain from consumer, economic, bureaucratic, corporate and political technologies and ideologies. The notion of education, *conceived as a living process of personal engagement between an adult teacher or parent and a young child or student*, may well disappear in an increasingly managerial, corporate, and technicized environment. *How can educating and bringing up children remain a rich human and cultural activity?* (Tact, p.4)

We think that this last question is a key question for educational leaders and others but we are not sure how well it has been attended to by the makers and shapers of educational policy. At the same time, we are not so sure that this is a

"policy" issue at all—which is not to say we do not consider it enormously important—but rather to acknowledge that the most important things concerning the education of children and young people begin precisely where the blunt tools of policy development, policy analysis, policy implementation, etcetera, leave off. Again, this is not to be dismissive of the supportive role that thoughtful policy can play as we seek to enhance the educational and life experiences of children, only to point out that no matter how carefully crafted and diligently administered, on its own "policy" cannot suffice. More significantly, we think van Manen's question above is less a policy/policing question than an educational/pedagogic one. As a research group, we think it necessary to understand the difference between these "types" of questions and why this difference is an all-important one.

It is worth emphasizing that for us the idea of "deep purpose" denotes all that is meaningful and intrinsically valuable in education. We have a feeling that without a sense of deep purpose teaching stands to lose its coherence and deep intelligibility and become at best a kind of techne in which test scores, measurable objectives, and managerial strategies of one kind or another come to define the whole enterprise. We think that good teachers (and by inference the best principals) have always understood that good teaching can never be equated with "programmed" instruction nor even with "delivering the curriculum" even if the difference is often hard to articulate. What is undeniable is that some teachers and some principals have a sense of deep purpose and some do not.

The other thing we think is important to state is that the notion of "deep purpose" we are striving to articulate in this chapter goes beyond currently popular notions of "effectiveness" as found in the "effective schools" literature or in the work on "effective teaching" for example. In fact, there was very little in the mainstream literature on school reform that conformed to our notion of

"deep purpose." The closest parallel we could find was Roland Barth's refreshingly uncomplicated idea of the "good" school and Thomas Sergiovanni's advocacy on behalf of what he terms the "virtuous" school. However, while we think both authors are moving in the right direction with these somewhat old-fashioned sounding notions, their concept of the "good" school (Barth) and the "virtuous" school (Sergiovanni) do not yet capture what we are attempting to reference with the notion of deep purpose.

To speak of "deep purpose" is to recognize at the outset the philosophical, ethical, and pedagogical foundations of educational practice. We have come to believe that efforts to define education (and teaching) in ways that erode or otherwise attempt to dispense with the truth of this assertion can have serious alienating and distorting effects. And yet at the same time, we realize that the various domains of educational scholarship[7] have tended to operate as if none of this were true. As a research group, we find ourselves in a curious situation—somewhere between a rock and the proverbial hard place: given the difficulties that surround the contemporary practice of teaching at times we felt a reluctance to advance a position that can only add a further level of challenge to an already difficult task.

The Neglect of Deep Purpose

Although the research group did not give specific attention to the reasons for the neglect of this aspect of the educational endeavour (we were more concerned with the practical consequences of this neglect), we think it would be instructive at some future point to analyze the reasons for this situation. Of course, we have

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[7] This observation applies especially to the particular sub-field of educational administration which since its inception as an academic sub-discipline has attempted to define itself in defiance of the truth of this assertion.

our suspicions. While we do not claim any special expertise in these matters, we think that the current "model" of teacher education and leadership preparation might be examined. We wonder, for example, about an operational model that separates the preparation of teachers and curriculum people from their administrators. There are valid reasons to question such an arrangement. We also wonder how much of the formal curriculum of teachers and educational administrators focuses on the kinds of questions this study is endeavouring to raise. More generally we ask: What would a university-based preparation program look like that began to take these questions seriously? We think this is an important question that needs to be carefully examined.

Conclusion

As ever, we are conscious of having raised more questions than we have provided answers. And yet as a research group, we were less interested in providing "answers" to well-formulated problems of practice than we were in excavating the nature of educational practice to the depths that time and the usual constraints of ordinary life allowed. Amongst many other things this research has served to remind us of the depthful nature of that practice. And that in itself has been invigorating. In the following chapter we try to work out some of the implications of these observations for the actual practice of educational leadership.

Questions:

1. What kind or type of curricular understandings do principals need in order to function well as principals?

2. Can one be a principal without at the same time also being an educator? Is managing education at all the same thing as educating?

3. How can principals be encouraged to remain teachers at heart and in spirit?

Chapter 6

STRONG LEADERSHIP: PRINCIPALS AND CURRICULUM

STRONG LEADERSHIP: PRINCIPALS AND CURRICULUM

Introduction

Educating young people demands purposeful, intentional action. Teachers, principals and superintendents shape the environments in which others are given the opportunity to grow. Educators are called upon to act—to define where they stand, to think hard and well, both about what they take for granted and about things they do not understand, to make decisions. Educators have the responsibility to exercise judgement about complex, difficult and important issues, even while those complex, difficult and important issues are changing shape before their very eyes. And educators have both the right and the obligation to draw lines in the sand when it counts the most: to define what matters in their schools.

That is, educators are leaders. Some of them have formal positions within the hierarchy that everyone recognizes as "leadership roles." Others—like teachers—exercise their leadership within the classroom and among colleagues without official recognition that they, too, lead. In this chapter, we will explore what strength in leadership looks like, using specific examples from the research to answer questions about curriculum leadership. However, we are mindful of three important things. First of all the principalship is a role that people occupy. Roles do not exercise leadership; people do. And some of the people who exercise the strongest leadership in any school district are in the classroom. The daily practice of a teacher and the daily practice of a principal differ in important ways—but education is not well-served by the assumption that only those people who do administrative work serve in a leadership capacity.

Second, changing paradigms challenge traditional, hierarchical structures in organizations. Right now, the people who lead are spoken of as "at the top," or "above," or "superior" to those who are further "down the ladder," "in the trenches," "subordinate" or "following." In matters of hierarchical leadership, as well as in matters of authority, knowledge and relationships that we explored in earlier chapters, the ground is shifting in important ways. It is not always clear where these new directions will take us and thus it becomes impossible simply to describe what principals think about leadership, since ideas both about the principalship and about leadership seem to be changing in deep, fundamental ways. Principals differ profoundly in the kinds of relationships they believe should be fostered among educators, and thus, they differ profoundly in their understanding of what strong leadership looks like.

The third issue—and the one that underlies this entire research project—is that curriculum is not widely understood as calling forth the exercise of strong leadership. Overseeing the delivery or the implementation of the program of studies—yes, many educators see **that** as leadership. But curriculum itself, not really. In large organizations, curriculum people have not been seen as strong leaders, oriented to action and decision-making. They are valued more for their ability to consult, support, inform and advise those with "line" positions. They don't after all, lead in the way school-based administrators do. Until very recently there has been little official recognition of the leadership strength that flows from a coherent educational philosophy and deep understanding of what it means to structure educative experiences for young people.

"Curriculum" sets important leadership problems. In the current paradigm, these are primarily problems of implementation and of monitoring: how do principals ensure that teachers are following the curriculum guide faithfully and effectively? How do principals supervise that work to make certain that teachers manage the

young people in their classrooms properly? How do schools get results? In the emerging paradigm, "curriculum" poses a set of problems that differ in important ways. Rather than accepting the content of a course of studies as the "stuff" to be delivered, some educators are asking these kinds of questions: What is the proper place of subject matter in an educational experience? How do people construct knowledge? What counts as knowledge, and is the knowledge contained in curriculum guides the same as "real" knowledge? What happens when there is little continuity between the young person's experience of the world and the educational experiences offered to him or her in school? What happens when educational experiences are disconnected from each other so that school life is fragmented for the child? What does a teacher need to know and be in order to mediate a child's experience of the world and the bodies of knowledge that adults want him or her to learn about: the math, the science, literature, art and music that the child has not yet experienced? How, actually, does education help a child to grow?

For some people, of course, such questions remain in the thin air of theory, university course work or motivational speeches. But for others these questions are intensely practical. They call forth answers in the form of plans of action that help teachers decide on content, methods of instruction, resources and the whole organization of their classrooms and of the school. That is, for increasing numbers of educators, these curriculum questions are leadership questions. In this chapter, we will try to draw some conclusions about what strength in curriculum leadership might look like in light of the concerns, issues and questions that emerged from our analyses of the principals' talk about their daily work with teachers and with young people, talk that is the text of administration.

The Current Paradigm: Tough Answers

For a long time, educators have cultivated a particular image of leadership toughness to respond to questions that inevitably arise in the conduct of running an effective school: principals who know what they are doing and why, who are strong and self-sufficient. Such principals know that when the going gets hard, they had better have some answers—or they had better be able to find them. As curriculum changes pass across their desks, the strongest of these leaders have created systems that allow the effective delegation of details to department heads, curriculum leaders and teachers. Such principals save the crucial aspects of school leadership for themselves, worrying only about what counts the most. As one principal commented:

> I delegate a lot, honestly I do. I have folks that I can delegate things to. Most of the things I delegate are paper and pencil things. The people things you don't delegate. You don't delegate.

Delegation has commonsense logic on its side. After all, no one person can do everything that needs to be done in a school. No one person can know everything that needs to be known. However, the idea of delegation begs closer examination.

To understand the current organizational and leadership paradigm it is useful to think of the educational landscape of schools and central offices as a grand map across which expertise of many kinds is dotted. Some people over here design curriculum. Others over there are responsible to know what it means. Some know about children with exceptional needs. Still others are learning strategists, resource teachers, staff developers, human resource managers and planners. For principals who operate from within the current paradigm, this network of experts

works very well. If questions emerge for which the principal has no answer, he or she can say, "I'm going to point you over there. Somebody there will have the answer for you." If problems arise for which there is no existing expert, people can lobby to create new positions which then become institutionalized and organizationally indispensable. Even within the school building the same thinking holds true. Certain parts of the job like the timetable, student discipline or professional development can be delegated. And if tough decisions need to be made, principals can call on support from many places and define the parameters of that support. Looking to document a troublesome teacher one principal described this scenario for obtaining outside help from (central office) specialists:

> Now we are going to get blood all the way up to our elbows. If you want to be part of this, stay with me. If you don't want to, get out. Because these things don't end nicely.

School districts thus plot complex maps dotted with networks of educational expertise available to principals. In the past, strong leadership has meant being able to access as much of this expertise as possible; in being successful in garnering for your own school at least your share of any particular pie. It thus becomes acceptable not to know the answer to complex questions so long as you can call up someone from outside who will take care of the matter for you.

Maps plotted in this way yield a semblance of efficiency, an illusion of rationality and functionality that works well at a surface level—particularly if there are sufficient resources to keep such systems growing at the same pace as the educational problems that beset principals. Everyone is kept busy all of the time, and the very prospect of losing any one of the points of expertise may be greeted as an alarming loss of support. However, such maps suffer a significant drawback that is becoming clearer as the emerging paradigm evolves. Such maps remain

fundamentally incoherent if there is no deeply understood sense of educational purpose to unite them. Supporting everything, we can come to stand for nothing. Thus, paradoxically central offices find themselves hiring people to design both integration and pull-out programs. Espousing the primacy of the classroom, there have been times when districts have devoted huge chunks of the budget to non-teaching functions. Decrying the effects of labelling children, schools demand massive increases in the number of "special" classes.

This is not a problem confined to education. In our culture generally, people rely on highly specialized experts for answers. We are coming out of a long period in which the solution to problems of all kinds have resided in more dollars, more technology, more resources, more quick-fixes. Problem-solving degenerates into believing, "If only we only had *more* of this or that, we would be fine." But an adequate response to problems that beset education today requires more than proper funding, more even than the infusion of more dollars, more aides, more resources. Our culture is deeply infused with a technical-rational approach to problem solving which sees all answers as residing somewhere "out there." From the highest levels of government on down, there has been enormous (if unspoken) support for the notion that if only you can find the right person to complain to you will also find the solution to any problem. There is absolutely no question that schools **must** be adequately funded. But more and more people are coming to see that long-lasting solutions do not reside in externals.

In issues pertaining to teaching, learning and educational leadership a pervasive fragmentation has led to a vision of schooling that makes it acceptable to say that someone "out there" knows best about curriculum; that others can do the thinking, reading and research; that understanding resides some place else to which you can go for insight.

The appeal of such an orientation to action is enormous. It renders simpler and more manageable matters that would otherwise remain extraordinarily complex. For example, we live today with the powerful thrust from government and industry to make global economic competitiveness a fundamental goal of education. A strong leadership response to public discontent with school performance might be to go after "the results"; to run schools according to consumer demand, to achieve high scores on external examinations by weeding out all students who are not likely to perform well, to take curriculum back to the basics or forward into high technology.

But, of course, educators have been down this road before. In the post-Sputnik era, teachers all across North America were rushed into ill-considered curriculum changes designed to address a perceived threat to national security. In the opinion of some[8] we are about 30 years behind where we might otherwise have been in our understanding of how to teach mathematics and science because we rushed into "the new math" for all the wrong reasons. Both educators and the public at large need to be asking hard questions about what the future might demand of our children and youth; to be listening, reading, watching and thinking; to be reconceptualizing some of the most basic assumptions upon which schooling rests.

The Emerging Paradigm: Asking Tough Questions

In a previous chapter, we suggested that there is an important difference between doing things right and doing the right things. This difference is central to understanding what strength looks like in the emerging paradigm. From the

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[8]See for example, Deborah Meier, "Reinventing teaching." In *Teachers' College Record 93*: 4, Summer 1992, pp. 594-609.

outset, however, it is important to emphasize the danger of setting up an "either-or" contrast between the current paradigm and the emerging one. Educational reform on this continent has a long history of defining itself in terms of opposites. Thus, for example, when educators began to criticize teacher-centred classrooms in which knowledge from outside was imposed on students from above, many swung to the opposite extreme. In the name of a more progressive system of education, they insisted that all knowledge was an unfolding from within; that students learned best by discovery. In heeding the call to a child-centred pedagogy many teachers lost their confidence. If they were not supposed to transmit knowledge, to pour it into children's empty heads, what **were** they supposed to do? If they were not supposed to drill spelling lists, that must mean they were not to teach spelling at all. In embracing the opposite of the practices that were the object of concern many teachers lost sight of the real work that needed to be done. In rejecting the aims and methods of one form of education, they developed new practices as reactions to what they did not like rather than thinking through more constructive alternatives. As the saying goes, the pendulum of educational reform swings back and forth from one extreme to the other. And, of course, a chief characteristic of pendulums is that ultimately, they go nowhere.

As we describe an emerging leadership paradigm in which it is more important to do the right things than to simply do things right, it would be incorrect to say that this new paradigm places no importance on action, on decision-making, on tough stands and clear answers. If increasing numbers of principals prefer genuine collaboration among professional equals to autocratic leadership, they are not saying that **anywhere** their staff chooses to stand is educationally sound just because the staff chooses it. If some principals reject the self-sufficient exercise of power, they do **not** want to replace it with indecision and feckless hand-wringing.

What they call for, instead, is a concerted effort for all educators to make problematic the settled, ordinary, taken-for-granted assumptions about schools, about teaching and learning and about leadership that most people think are just "the way things are." Of necessity, these problems live more fully as questions than as answers right now. If the way we usually do things in schools seems to serve our society less and less well, it is not yet clear exactly what needs to be done differently. Principals are caught in the hard truth of what it means to live in the middle of a changing paradigm: they must call into question some of the most ordinary details of their work at the same time as they are responsible for the running and efficient management of their schools.

Throughout this study we have attempted to tease out what these questions are, even (or perhaps especially) when the principals we talked to were struggling to give them words. They are questions about the fundamental purposes of education: about what, and who, schools are for. Some principals think these questions are well settled and that strong leadership means getting on with the job without the distractions of unnecessary navel-gazing. Others, however, are far less certain that the old answers still hold. These principals wrestle with a sense that something is missing; that our efforts to introduce new programs, new reforms, new structures, new methods keep educators busy putting out fires on the surface when the source of the problems is far more deeply rooted.

The questions these principals ask help us to see that the way schools are organized shapes what young people are—and are not permitted to learn; who young people are—and are not—encouraged to become. These questions invite us to consider the possibility that curriculum is not simply neutral; it is not just the "stuff" that arrives on teachers' desks. The problems of curriculum are more than just the problems of delivery and implementation. They are, rather, problems of fundamental purposes. These principals take seriously the idea that

curriculum questions entail issues of the exercise of adult power over young people, issues of social class and race, issues of authority in a hierarchial system that reinforces not only where people are, but also where they belong. That is, they are willing to recognize the possibility that education is a moral enterprise, not just an instrumental one that takes young people efficiently from childhood to adulthood, from the world of play to the world of work. These principals take the daily life experience of young people in school seriously, not just as the means to an end such as high examination scores or parent satisfaction, but also as an end that calls for close scrutiny on its own terms.

Such principals seem also to understand that what counts as knowledge is not a settled issue. It has become commonplace to say that the world into which our children and youth are moving will be very different from the one that we live in today. Subject matter knowledge is changing rapidly, and so is our picture of how people learn and how knowledge is constructed. It takes great strength to lead an enterprise dedicated to education when the matters about which we are supposed to be expert are in genuine, fundamental flux.

It may take even greater strength to confront the dilemmas of one's own practice. Who among us has not felt the discomfort of coming face to face with the years in which we did the kinds of things that, in the light of current reflection, no longer seem as worthy as they did at the time? How do we accept in ourselves, that growth inevitably means discomfort with how we were "back then?" In terms of knowledge, the division between "that was then" and "this is now" is drawn more sharply with each passing year. Living in the presence of this knowledge is a leadership issue of no small consequence.

Strong leaders in the emerging paradigm are willing to confront hard educational questions. It is not enough to ask: "What is in the curriculum guide and how

should I implement it?" Leaders must also ask, "What does this curriculum stand for? What do I stand for?" In asking questions like these strong leaders cultivate the ability to create dissonance, to force issues back to first premises, to help people see beneath the surface of their everyday work in schools. As principals their expertise lies less in acquiring right answers to the questions everyone already asks, than in creating, in their own schools and classrooms, new images of the possible that allow the enterprise to move forward. In bringing new questions to the forefront, such leaders deliberately create spaces within current practice that encourage people to reflect within and among themselves about what they truly stand for as educators.

This new kind of leadership is not "empty at the core." Rather, it calls for the moral courage to hold a vision of education open for dialogue and probing questions. Such leadership is not, of course, without its tough issues. It is easy, for example, for principals to "let" staffs decide what to do about important professional and organizational questions and then to "lead from behind" as the staff sets out to accomplish its goals. But not all educational decisions are **educative** in their consequences for children and youth. Sometimes whole groups of teachers can achieve consensus on grounds that are not educationally sound. They can design repressive discipline policies, jump on fast-moving bandwagons, block important initiatives. Whole staffs can decide to spend the budget on workbooks or to counsel only "A" students to take 30 level courses in high school. They can invoke their "personal practical knowledge" of children and teaching to silence critics who challenge bad practice. The leadership issue is not that such people cannot be assisted, later on, to ask more profound questions or to reflect in greater depth. Rather, the fundamental question is—where was the principal when issues and stances like these came to be chosen as important in the first place?

Conclusion

At a time when there is considerable public dissatisfaction with schooling, it is tempting for leaders to cave in to consumer demands—especially when those demands call for a return to knowledge, skills and structures that are comfortably familiar to us. Strong leaders ask tough questions about this dissatisfaction, however. They demand to know what needs to be changed so that we can be more successful in keeping as many of our young people as possible in school and learning. They force us to face the fact that many of the students and parents that administrators see in their offices have anger in their hearts, and that some of that anger belongs to us. They help us to identify what we would have to change in our schools if we took the point of view of young people and parents more seriously—if we allowed their voices to genuinely inform our curriculum decision-making. These principals force all of us to question the current educational hierarchy in which leadership has become a function that is exercised further and further from the classroom.

It is through the exercise of strong leadership that the adults and the young people in any school district become engaged in conversations and relationships that are deeply rooted in a clear sense of purpose and direction. Like the principal we quoted earlier in the study, all of us look for those moments that let our wings fly out of that box, to see what we could do. To see what we could do.

Questions

1. How does leadership strength manifest itself in your setting? What does it mean to be a strong leader and who are the strong leaders?

2. What place does delegation have as we flatten the hierarchical structure of schools? Who delegates and to whom do they delegate?

3. As our ideas about specialized expertise change, how will the roles of "curriculum people" at the system and department levels change?

4. The critical need for the development of collaborative cultures in schools has been identified by Roland Barth in *Improving Schools from Within*. Discuss leadership practices which contribute to the development of collaborative cultures.

5. Michael Fullen of O.I.S.E., identifies the problem of "group think" which can interfere with effective collaboration. What can be done in school to avoid problem of silent disagreement and group think? How can we ensure that the difficult questions are asked?

6. School leaders face complex challenges in responding appropriately to the diverse interests of stakeholder groups. How can school leaders facilitate the discourse amongst diverse interest groups. How can they ensure that people feel consulted and appropriately involved in decisions?

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Concluding Remarks

Despite much soul searching we find it difficult—even in this final section—to be definitive or to offer an action plan or concrete prescriptions for practice. We are aware that we have raised many more questions than we have offered solutions and this in itself may invite the criticism of others. However, it is important to underscore the fact that this study was not conceived in a mode of problem-solving research; instead we have attempted the more difficult task of articulating a value-framework within which to better understand the nature of the problems that beset us.

Nevertheless, this does not mean that we have learned nothing, nor that we have nothing useful to say now that the study is complete. In this brief final section we wish to offer a few tentative insights that have been gleaned as a result of engaging in this work. For the sake of brevity, we put forward our concluding insights in the form of the following set of synoptic statements. This is followed by a short discussion and concluding afterthoughts.

Concluding Insights

- The importance of curriculum leadership cannot be overstated. The notion of "curriculum leadership" returns the leadership construct back to its educative and pedagogic foundations.

- Beyond a certain minimum threshold of management competence, what distinguishes the truly great principal is the degree of sensitivity and attunement brought to bear upon curricular and pedagogic matters. The things of lasting pedagogic consequence are to be located in the minutiae of everyday life in schools and in the reflective stance engendered.

- We need to reconsider what 'strength' in leadership looks like in education. In other words we need a concept of leadership that does justice to the ethical and philosophical foundations of the practice.

- The limitations of a policy-driven approach to excellence in education are becoming clearer; what is needed is a de-emphasizing of the policy aspect and a re-emphasizing of the educative aspect. On its own policy cannot produce the results expected of it.

- There is a need to address issues of 'deep purpose' at the same time as we continue to be concerned with questions of efficiency and effectiveness in education.

We do not intend a long discussion of these points as to do so would be largely to recapitulate the study itself. However, we feel they merit dialogue and discussion both within the community of educators and beyond. And yet it is here that our hopes are on fragile ground. We are not sure that in the current climate of retrenchment there is the space or the desire to engage in such a conversation. And as policy makers search out new ways to forge ever stronger links between schooling and the economic system, we suspect the political, social and psychological space for questions such as ours gets smaller and smaller.

We stand truly at a crossroads. It is not just a cliche to say that the choices we make today will shape tomorrow's world—for ourselves certainly, but especially for our children. At times it seems we are carried along by currents over which we have little or no control; we detect a growing sense of powerlessness to give shape and direction (meaning) to our lives. The old philosophical questions, "For what do we educate, to what end and for whom?" seem to have lost their potency and force. For the research group it seems more than ever necessary to revive these

'old' questions and others like them as we seek to reclaim for education its rightful role as contributor to the social and cultural life of the province.

Lastly, we recognize there is a good deal of talk these days about the need for 'moral' leadership and for the restoration of ethical values in educational administration. While we are in many ways sympathetic to such entreaties we are not so sure that on their own such entreaties go far enough. Moral and/or ethical leadership that is not already imbued with a deeply educative and pedagogic impulse is not the kind of 'leadership' that is likely to make the difference we are seeking. It is this critical juxtaposition of elements that we are referencing with our notion of *curriculum* leadership. We have a sense that the issue is at least as much a problem of education as it is a problem of leadership, and that our contemporary fascination with the term 'leadership' (in the absence of an equally strong and determined interest in the meaning, nature and significance of pedagogy) easily becomes a hollow and meaningless exercise.

The final point to be made is that being and becoming a real educator (and therefore a leader) is an ongoing and never fully-realized endeavour. It is difficult, challenging and time-consuming work. One of the consequences of this research is that we have come to see that definitions of educational leadership that are not founded in, and interwoven with, a deep concern for *real education* are no true definitions at all. Our hope is that this study is a small step in the right direction.

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